

FINDING OUR HEAD WITHOUT LOSING OUR FEET

Morality of Circumcision among The Zulus

Ntokozo Mthembu

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AD	Anno Domini (Latin phrase meaning “in the year of our Lord”)
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASFA	AIDS Foundation of South Africa
BC	Before Christ
BCE	Before Common Era
CE	Common Era
EOT	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
INTACT	International Organisation Against Circumcision Trauma
IP	Intellectual Property
IUCN	Inter-Commission Task Force on Indigenous Peoples
KMT	Kemit, ancient name of Egypt
KN	Kebra Negast
MMC	Medical Male Circumcision
MRC	South African Medical Research Council

NO HARMM	National Organisation to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males
NOCIRC	National Organisation of Circumcision Information Resource Centres
SA	South Africa
STDs	Sexual Transmitted Diseases
TK	Tara Klamp
TMC	Traditional Male Circumcision
UGX	Ugandan Shilling
UK	United Kingdom
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USD	U.S. Dollar
WHO	World Health Organization
ZAR	South African currency code for Rand

FOREWORD

I am delighted to be writing the foreword to this book, *Finding Our Head Without Losing Our Feet: Morality of Circumcision among the Zulus*, by Ntokozo Mthembu, a young and budding academic at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

The book, which in essence is exploratory, insightful and well thought out, should serve as a useful source of material in the related disciplines of sociology, religion and ethics. A number of the issues raised are likely to be considered contentious and liable to offend the sensibility of some elements in our society; particularly those portions that have dwelt on mysticism and a mixture of religions. This will also apply to Steward's concept of indigenous Hebrew – thus giving the impression that we have indigenous Hebrews in Africa.

This book is highly informative and the author has displayed strong evidence of in-depth, serious literature research – evident by the more than 130 bibliographic entries. The book consists of eight chapters. Chapter one provides a contextual background to the book, while chapter two examines Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), including the spiritual nature of indigenous systems and divine royal theocratic reign. Chapter three is the most historical one, examining the “fall of ancient faith and the rise of modern religion”; the covenant of the Most High and people; and also the formative era account. Chapter four is principally on contemporary indigenous cultural practices. Chapters five and six form the very heart of the book, while chapter seven flows naturally from the preceding chapters...and here the author attempts to provide the rationale for the revival of circumcision rites.

The author has subtly implied that going through the circumcision rites serves to meet the triple functions of cultural, religious and political goals of the individual, while non-performance is assumed to negatively impact on the political fortunes of those who failed to participate in the rites. The author has provided a rich glossary of terms to help the non-Zulu reader, which is beneficial as this book is written with an international audience in mind.

Timing for this book could not have been better, as people are beginning to seriously question the relevance of this age-long tradition, especially in the light of recent fatalities at certain initiation centres, which has angered some members of the South African Parliament.

Ntokozo Mthembu has aimed to present a balanced view of circumcision as it relates to the Bible, orthodox medicine and culture. However, it is likely to attract comments and attention from sociologists, and practitioners of some religious faiths, particularly Christians, as well as those in the medical profession. I recommend this book for those who are interested in cultural studies and all related disciplines.

Professor Emman Osakwe, a former visiting scholar at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

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Firstly, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, College of Humanities Research Office, Strategic Research Fund for their financial and unwavering scholastic support of the research project entitled: *The scrutiny on revival of circumcision practices in the post-apartheid South Africa: a case study of perceptions of young men based in Durban, Jozini and Hluhluwe communities in KwaZulu-Natal*, which acted as the catalyst to accomplish this monograph that forms part of the project.

Secondly, I would like to thank all the staff at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, especially Dr N. Chellan, Mr Mtshali and others who made their contribution to achieving this project. Thank you also to post-graduate student, Ms Nontuthuko Khumalo, for her commitment during data collection and aspiration to discover and reach out to new frontiers of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

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I would like to extend my special *Ngiyabonga* to all individuals and community members who participated in various spheres of this project. Your time, courage, vision, love, support, and most of all your stories in relation to the debut of indigenous cultural traits such as circumcision rites, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, has been precious to my research and this book. Thus, this project is dedicated to the promotion of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems and its creation as an attempt to redress

past injustices and exploration of the indigenous knowledge frontier.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge data that was derived from my current Doctor of Literature and Philosophy -Sociology study entitled: *Black African township youth survival strategies in post-apartheid South Africa: a case study of KwaMashu township within eThekweni Municipality* (at University of south Africa) that highly influenced the initiation and completion of this project.

PREFACE

“What the world can learn from Africa is the focus on humanness and spirituality, to complement [and possibly replace] industrial and Western individualism [which goes with avarice and greed]”

– Magadlela, 2008

No society is static. They are always in a state of flux...and the African one is no exception. From the imprisonment of Israelites by the Pharaoh through to the colonisation by the Western and Eastern worlds, current changes sweeping through Africa are just the tail end of what has been happening. These changes are viewed by some as the result associated with the separation of human kind from the Creator, Most High. Nabudere (2011:51) echoing Mafeje, for example, notes that the present urban setting was imposed upon the indigenes and led to their alienation from themselves. This, in turn, is the basis for them wanting to regain their Africanness. He further argues that in order for the indigenes to achieve Africanness, they need a relevant platform to begin research on issues pertaining to culture and development. For this process to happen, the new social systems need to be explained in a concept grounded on two opposite spheres – modernity and traditionalism (*Parsons, 1948*). Inherent to this is the gradual move from the traditional sphere towards the modern capitalist sphere as the basis of all development. This approach then does away with cultural relativity and replaces it with absolute ethnographic values, the contemporary global bourgeois society becomes the reference point for the destruction

of traditional value systems (*ibid*, p52).

In order to achieve this sought-after state, it becomes evident that some form of distancing from the Greco-Christian world theory would be the first step towards regaining an African-centred paradigm that is holistic and inclusive (*Nabudere, 2011:97*). The issue of languages – a heated topic at present – needs to be part of that renaissance and the core of presenting indigene's culture. A clear understanding of and distinction between the ideology of Africanism and Pan-Africanism should be demarcated from the notion of Africanness. It is worth noting that while Pan-Africanism is inclined to the view of nationalism encouraged by Europe, the fundamentals of the idea of Africanness, on the other hand, are the moral fibre of the African people. Thus, it is significant to note, especially when discussing issues that pertain to novelty, social structures and systems, that “our historicity entails unavoidable interaction between semantic change and continuity” (*ibid.98*).

CHAPTER 1



“...Western civilisation has split apart spiritual institutions from political and state institutions – the secularisation process. Thus it suggests that people, both the marginalised and the elite, have learned to think of the material world and the spiritual world as two separate worlds”

– Mthembu, 2011:57

INTRODUCTION

The democratic post-apartheid rule in South Africa heralded an era whose main objective was to redress the past injustices of the majority of this country's citizens. Communities had not only been polarised, but some had been totally marginalised and a cultural revival was top priority. For example, the First-Fruits Ceremony (*umkhosi woselwa*) and Reed Dance Ceremony (*umkhosi womhlanga*) stand out as

two key Zulu celebrations that have been restored, renewing a sense of belonging and identity to all Zulu people.

Recently, the circumcision rite – the central subject of this book – has become part of this cultural revival process. A critical review of the rationale behind this cultural revival by other Nguni groups in South Africa, in particular the Zulu nation, will be outlined here together with the contextual background in an attempt to define the concept of indigenous populace in relation to the environment. Furthermore, the central concept of faith – in this case ancestry worshipping (*amadlozi*) versus Christianity, and its connection to understanding the origins of Zulu people and their rituals that relate to rites of passage from childhood to adulthood – will also be explored.

Historical accounts are revisited to gain a broader understanding of the rites of passage. Research was conducted in an urban setting in an attempt to understand young people's perspective to cultural revival as a strategy to curb HIV/AIDS and related sexually transmitted diseases. Findings will be reviewed and discussed, and suggestions based on theories formulated will be put forward as further areas of research and intervention relating to this issue.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

In 1994, the South African Government ushered in a new political epoch of post-apartheid development, which brought with it high hopes among previously disadvantaged communities for an improvement in their daily lives (*Mthembu, 2011:56*). This has led to the adoption of various relevant policies in each sphere of life, one of them relating to Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Section 185 of the South African Constitution requires the establishment of a Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities. It also proposes the need for the establishment of relevant IKS institutions

within existing structures – such as universities, community centres, and other related stakeholders – that will act as facilitating and enabling mechanisms, and their services, programmes, and projects should involve broad participation and collaboration of members from local and indigenous communities.

A revival of some cultural practices – that were previously phased out by both the indigenous populace and colonisers, for reasons that were known by them, were later reinstated to serve apartheid regime policies. One such practice for the Zulu nation is circumcision. It had been stopped...an old practice phased out of all cultural practices for decades (*Magama, 1998; Department of Health – KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, 2010a & b*). Although the Zulu people stopped this cultural practice, other tribal groups such as the amaXhosa and abeSuthu continued with the practice of circumcision (*Mafeje, 1991:40*).

This study intends to explore and interrogate the rationale behind the revival of this old practice in the globalised era. It aims to provide relevant yet contemporary information on the subject, as South Africa has minimal documented information and evidence on this very important aspect of South Africa's majority indigenous people, the Zulus.

It is worth mentioning that from the onset opinions varied as to the categorisation of circumcision. There are differing views, ranging from it being regarded as genital mutilation to cultural preservation. It is important to gain a better understanding of the impact of the current practices to the sustenance of the cultural practice within the present dominant social settings of *consumerism*¹ (*Daneel, 1998:242*).

In 2006, trials in which male circumcision was tested as a health necessity to reduce HIV transmission, had to be halted because of unexpected interim results showing some protective effect which validated the results from an earlier South African trial conducted

¹ It emphasises the material progress and upward mobility as moral justifiable trends irrespective of its alienating consequences especially when it comes to self and place (*ibid*).

in Orange Farm (*Department of Health – KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, 2010a; WHO & UNAIDS, 2007:14*). Consequently, various social institutions saw circumcision as a practical source of stability and social change in modern urbanised communities. It was also seen as being central to a general understanding of current problems such as HIV/AIDS and the ability to resolving such problems (*ibid*). The scrutiny of the role played by state departments (the Department of Health) and relevant community structures (local leaders, e.g., Chief or *Induna*) and traditional leaders' organisations in shaping the current practices of circumcision in the post-apartheid era (*Department of Health – KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, 2010a*), has thus been the main point of focus in its facilitation.

On the other hand, when socio-cultural, behavioural and developmental challenges facing the revival of some of the old religio-cultural practices such as circumcision are considered, it is recommended that a closer look at the backdrop of the political transition from a minority regime government to majority-rule in the country be taken (*Daneel, 1998:237*). This will entail engaging with various developmental policies passed to redress the social injustices of the apartheid era and the role of circumcision which may improve the competitive abilities to meet challenges posed by past injustices. In addition, the rationale behind the adoption of circumcision as a strategy, and its role in redressing the past injustices amongst the black African youth life in general, if that is the case at all, will also be explored (*Mthembu, 2011*).

Du Toit (2003) and James (2005) argue that it is imperative to understand issues such as traditional career development perspectives alongside cultural restoration that is seen to be the means by which an individual sustains life. Understanding how young black African people conceive their transition to adulthood, what they regard adulthood to mean, and how their development is facilitated or hindered by structural conditions, will be central to this discussion. (*Richter & Panday, 2006:3*).

The Department of Trade and Industry has devised a special policy

and framework on the protection of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Called the intellectual property (IP) system, it uses a variety of tools in the form of patents, trademarks, copyright, trade secret and contractual arrangements (*Department of Trade and Industry, 2004:10*). In this manner, the IKS is preserved for utilisation by future generations through facilitation of the convergence of learning conventions of the academia and related community knowledge frontiers (*Mthembu, 2011:5*). Thus, the impact of the revival and continuance of circumcision as a strategy of and practice by some black communities, and its influence in social change in the post-apartheid era are noticeable (*Snyman, 1997; Flick, 1998:29; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994:139*).

This is evident by the fact that male circumcision has shot up to an estimated 11 million young males who have been circumcised since its inception in 2009 (as in Orange Farm where more than 5,000 males got circumcised in 11 months) (*Setswe, 2009*). This therefore, contributes to the overall task of re-personalisation of not only the Nguni people, but also the African – of which the Zulu people are part of. This monograph will also attempt to respond to what Okot p'Bitek has stated in his book entitled *Decolonizing African Religion: A Short History of African Religions in Western Scholarship*, that... “the African scholar has two clear tasks before him. First, to expose and nullify all false ideas about African peoples, and cultures that have been perpetuated by Western scholarships,” and adds that, “second, the African scholar must endeavour to present the institutions of African peoples as they really are” (*K'Aoko, 1986:15*).

CHAPTER 2



“Those who identify with the school...the way consensus and commitment are inculcated. First, there are communal acts, second, these involve ritual behaviour and third, they are rich in symbolism”

– Shipman, 1975:37

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS): GUIDING VALUES

For better understanding of the issues being discussed, it is vital to draw parameters on considerations of people in relation to modern society in general. A working definition of indigenous people, who are regarded as the bearers of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, will be attempted here.

Who are the indigenous people?

Global institutions and various communities have defined indigenous people in different ways. According to the Inter-Commission Task Force on Indigenous Peoples - IUCN's, it has proven to be problematic for international organisations to define “indigenous”. However, indigenous people themselves have provided several definitions in this regard (1997:17). For example, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples defines indigenous peoples as the population groups who, from ancient times have inhabited the lands where they live, aware of having characters of their own, with social traditions and means of expressions that are linked to the country they inherited from their ancestors, with a language of their own, and having convictions of belonging to a people, who have an identity in themselves and regarded by others as such (Yandian, 2001).

Another definition of indigenous people that has received broad international recognition is that of the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Sub-Commission on Preventions of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. They define indigenous communities as peoples and nations which have an historical permanence with linkages to pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that have developed on their territories, viewing themselves distinct from other sections of existing societies in comparing with those territories that form part of them. Presently, they do not form a dominant section of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit their ancestral territories and ethnic identity to future generations – key elements which form the fundamental basis of their continued existence as people, in line with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems (IUCN, 1997:17; Yandian, 2001).

This historical continuity is characterised by the following:

- Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;
- Common ancestry with the general culture of the original occupants of these lands, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, and so on);
- Language (whether used as the only language, as the mother tongue, as the usual language of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);
- Residence in certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;
- Other relevant factors (*IUCN, 1997:28*).

It is significant to recognise that indigenous people have an harmonious relationship with *nature*, formulating sustainable strategies and cultural values that they not only respect, but which also serve as vital sources of knowledge. Thus, ecopolitics rightfully emphasises that the term *wilderness*, as it is popularly used, is unacceptable, and relates to concepts such as “wild resources”, and so on.

Furthermore, indigenous people are communities that possess an environmental ethic that has developed over years of living in a particular ecosystem. This ethic cannot be regarded as universal, though indigenous systems in general do tend to place emphasis on the following specific values and features:

- Co-operation;
- Family bonding and cross generational communication, including links with ancestors;
- Concern for the well-being of future generations;

- Self-sufficiency on a local level, and relying on locally available natural resources;
- Limiting exploitation of resources, and respect for nature, especially for sacred sites (*IUCN, 1997*).

IUCN (1997) further argues that it is important to consider the following aspects when attempting to gain a better understanding of the indigenous people.

Nature

Kate Soper’s study, *What is Nature?* (1995), emphasises that the present construction of nature includes not only a spatial component, but also a contemporal one. According to the Western experience of nature, Soper argues that it is inseparable from regretful recreations of the past. In “natural” spaces, time is configured in particular ways, as nature is “used as a spatial and as a contemporal marker: both to distinguish between the grey and the green...but also as a way of thinking the relations of the older to the newer” (*Brooks, 2000*).

Brought closer to home, nature provides a backdrop to a social and political history of the labour reserves such as Zululand. It relates in many ways to the manner in which these spaces were designated in dominant cultural representations. Considering this, it is then possible to conceive of natural spaces as existing outside of history, or alternatively as carriers of a romanticised history, which can be particularly troubling in a “post-colonial” context such as in South Africa. Here, the revival of cultural practices such as circumcision inevitably coincided with broader processes of conquest, and the inclusions and exclusions of the colonial era. Brooks argues that “natural” spaces – such as reserves, i.e. game reserves and labour reserves – need to be placed back in history, in their

political and historical context (2000).

The concept of “nature” has two implications inherent to it, a covert time dimension: firstly, where natural spaces are viewed as timeless, outside of time, or located in pre-history, before the beginning of recorded time. To call a particular landscape “natural” is often to deprive it of its historical context – in other words it is effectively to remove it from society. Environmental historian William Cronon (1995), argued that this is witnessed with the present usage of the word “wilderness” – where “nature” is portrayed as the antithesis to “culture”. This approach leads to a state where wilderness space becomes impossible to locate within its human historical context.

Secondly, there is also a sense that the older, which is regarded as more “natural”, is seen as better. Brooks (2000) argues that there is a need to consider nature which also functions as an important element in shaping an idyllic version of the past. A “natural” space refers to a land that is untainted by modernity, an extension of an imagined past which was generous, courageous, or more real. In this case, nature becomes an idealised past, a “lost time-space”, which torments us with the possibility of escape from the present. Thus, designating a landscape as natural tends to hide the more distasteful features of the land’s history, such as repressive social relations and the effects on ordinary people’s livelihoods, and capitalist intervention in the countryside (Brooks, 2000).

The landscape of the Zulu people thus becomes “timeless Zululand” which is predicated by the persistence of an unchanging Zulu culture. Brooks (2000) argues that this tends to create an impression that commands attractions to Shakaland – for instance, the experience of the spirit of Africa, spirit of tribal rhythms, spear wielding warriors, and the mysterious rituals of the healers interpreting messages from the spirits. Our understanding of a sacred space of nature needs to be outside the normal rules of time and social history, as this space should be interpreted to outsiders by people who are “close to nature”- the indigenous populace (Brooks, 2000). In addition, this tends to invoke

a “general and variably expressed modern desire to (re)turn to nature by way of indigenous cultures, to see indigenous peoples as the First “Conservationists” agency. Then the sacred space of the wilderness can be understood in totality only by the native, while others, through their patience, may access it through this agency (Brooks, 2000:68; Yandian, 2001).

The *spiritual nature of indigenous systems*

Although indigenous knowledge is highly sensible and practical, indigenous people normally regard this knowledge as rooted in its spiritual base – maintaining that all creation is sacred, while the sacred and secular are separable. It further argues that spirituality is the highest form of consciousness, and spiritual consciousness is the highest form of awareness (IUCN, 1997; Yandian, 2001). Hence, indigenous knowledge is not just local knowledge, but universal knowledge as expressed in the local environment.

IUCN (1997) argues that experts exist when they are conscious of atypical nature’s organising principles, sometimes illustrated as entities, spirits, or natural law. Knowledge of the environment thus depends not only on the relationship between humans and nature, but also between the visible world and the invisible spirit world. The distinctive feature of traditional African faith is that it is: “a way of life, [with] the purpose of...orders [ing] our relationship with our fellow men and with our environment, both spiritual and physical. As the root of it is a quest for harmony between men, the spirit world, nature and society...” (IUCN, 1997; Yandian, 2001). Nature is viewed as the manifestation of God (*ibid*). Thus, man should strive to be natural and God-like. It is important to be in good health as that enables one to keep in constant communication with one’s internal God who is, spiritually, part and parcel of the Most High God, the all-encompassing and super magnificent God (Yandian, 2001).

In indigenous experiences, it is claimed that the unseen is as much a component of reality, as it forms part of that which is seen. The spiritual is as much a part of reality as the material, and there is a complementary relationship between the two, with the spiritual having more power than the material (*ibid*). Consequently, the individual and community are made up of the spiritual-unseen, as well as the material-the visible.

Spirituality

Spirituality is nothing more than good ethics and just environment where it rises (*Johnson, 1997:21*). In other words, is the mastering of the individual to bring his mind under the control of the spirit – *1 John 4*.

The control of spirit over the mind is achieved when one accomplishes a massive triumph of the liberated soul over the body (*Johnson, 1997*). It is when one subjugates his passion, brings the mind under the control of spirit, and the soul stands unfettered and original, only then can one begin to get some idea of his exalted birth right – *Daniel 1:8-16; 3:20-30*.

The state of self-realisation is the uplifting manifestation of Most High. In a literal sense it's when one comes to know Most High (*Johnson, 1997:48*). No one can know Most High until he consciously accepts one within him. Thus, there was no need for tribal or racial divides within this ancient African civilisation. The question that might arise may be why we call it an African civilization that was characterised by the knowledge of the Most High order that manifested in the African spiritualist civilisation, referred to as Pe and Æthiopia.

This may be further linked to the name "Africa" which was given to the continent by the Romans. Steward (2013) states that the continent of Africa was also called by many names – Kemet, Libya, Ortegia, Corphye, Egypt, Ethiopia and/or Sudan, Olympia, Hesperia, Oceania, and Ta-Merry. The ancient name for Africa was "Akebu-Lan" (mother of mankind) or "Garden of Eden". This name was also used by the Moors, Nubians,

Numidians, Khart-Haddans (Carthaginians), and Ethiopians. However, Genesis 10:6-20 illustrates the descendants of Ham as being located in North Africa, Central Africa and in some parts of southern Asia. Psalm 105:23 also mentions the "Land of Ham" in Egypt, and Psalm 78:51 links the "tents of Ham" with Egypt. Again in Genesis 10, Nimrod, son of Cush (whose name means "black"), established a civilisation in Mesopotamia. Lastly, Genesis 11 notes that Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldees, a land whose earliest inhabitants included blacks (*Steward, 2013*).

The ancient African civilisation – given the names Africa and Æthiopia by the Greeks – is the Paradise of Most High/Land of the Blacks. All human beings cannot be classified as Afrikan, European, Asian, American, Oriental, and so on, as they all form part of the original Afrikan. From a spiritual and linguistic point of view, Af-Ra-Ka means the "flesh of Ra's spiritual double, or the flesh of Most High's mental double", which is what all human beings should strive to be. Ri is a plural form of Ra, or more than one form of Ra. Thus we have Af-ri-ka, or Afrika. (*Motshekga, 2007*).

DIVINE ROYAL THEOCRATIC REIGN

Central to understanding all African issues is the fact that belief system(s) operated within the ambit of theocratic order (*Gay, 2004*). Perhaps one can start by defining the term theocratic order. It is a form of governing the nation/people in which a divine being – Most High – is recognised as the supreme civil ruler, but the celestial laws are interpreted by ecclesiastical authorities (priests, prophets, chosen one, and so on). A government subject to royal authority, and in an ecclesiastical world, a government administrated by the church.

Indeed, since the Most High is the ultimate source of all authority, in a sense He placed the different rulers in their relative positions (*Romans 13:1*). In Biblical Greek, "theocracy" means a rule [*kra'tos*] by Most High

[*the-os*']. What better government could there be than that of Jehovah/Jahovah Himself? (*Psalms 146:10*).

Perhaps it will be significant that theocracy order ruled for some time in Eden – the ancient name of Afrika – until Adam and Eve rebelled against the will of Most High – (*Genesis 3:1-6, 23*). In Abraham's time, a theocracy appears to have existed in the city of Salem, with Melchizedek as king-priest – (*Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-3*). However, again the national theocracy under Jehovah was re-established in the wilderness of Sinai in the 16th century BCE.

Since the time of Nimrod, men have tried different ways to govern human society. There have been dictatorships, monarchies, oligarchies, as well as various forms of democracy. The Most High Jehovah has permitted all of them. Nevertheless, all of man's efforts at government have failed. No human ruler has produced a long-lasting, stable, just society. "*Man has dominated man to his injury*" (*Ecclesiastes 8:9*).

The holistic nature of indigenous systems

It is worth noting that indigenous peoples normally view themselves as the guardians and stewards of nature, thus harmony and equilibrium among components of the Cosmos are central concepts in most indigenous cosmologies (*IUCN, 1997*). IUCN (1997) argues that most indigenous knowledge traditions recognise the link between health, diet, composition of different foods and medicinal plants, and the management of horticultural/natural resources. Indigenous knowledge encompasses information about location, movements and other factors explaining spatial patterns and timing in the ecosystem, including the sequence of events, cycles and trends. For example, indigenous peoples argue that the main significance of their knowledge systems is that it is connected to the land. More importantly, the relationships and obligations that arise from that connection are the core factors that

make up their identity (*IUCN, 1997:38*).

Despite the fact that some scholars have recognised the Zulus abandonment of carrying out the circumcision ritual, there is no explanation as to why it is still being continued. This is more evident when it comes to the misrepresentation of traditional circumcision in support of clinical surgery which is accompanied by the ego flattering Western ethno-centricism in the false interpretation of some aspects of pre-colonial African customs (*K'Aoko, 1986*). K'Aoko (1986) adds that colonisers sought to define indigenous people not in the way or what they really are and what they had, but in the opposite terms. K'Aoko argues that this was illustrated by Catherine George, the American anthropologist, when she noted that: "There was established thus early the pattern of thought which for many future centuries formed the basis for the approach to the 'primitives' of Africa, and which defined them not in terms of what they were and what they had, but in terms of what they presumably were not and had not, in terms, that is, of their inhumanity, their wildness and their lack of proper law" (1986).

CHAPTER 3



“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth”

– Exodus 20:4

THE “FALL” OF ANCIENT FAITH AND “RISE” OF MODERN RELIGION

As it was originally said that circumcision was associated with faith covenants between the Creator and His people, it is appropriate that this study revisit some of its fundamental tenets. Relating to this subject, Steward (2013) states that Africans are the indigenous Native Hebrews – or sometimes referred to as Jews. He further says this is one of the greatest secrets about Africa that has never been told before. Furthermore, for the past 2,000 years, Christian Europe has been tirelessly in a quest to conceal the African origin of the concepts,

doctrines, sacramental practices of present religion, and the documents that became the foundations of present knowledge in the academia and Christianity of Europe that has been redistributed. For instance, some of the black African indigenous knowledge artefacts remain scattered all over the western world knowledge centres including England and Italy,² as their respective museums do not credit the rightful owners/ bearers - monarchies that remain marginalised worldwide (Haynes, 2009:239).

Even the names of Abraham, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob were all derived from African tribal words and names (*ibid*). The earliest “Hebrew” name for God is Adonai, and Yahweh, another name for God, was derived from an African tribal God. Moreover, the names of the scribes of the Old Testament are not “Hebrew” or “Jewish” names, but reversed translations of African tribal names. It then stands to reason that Christian Europe has never known these names because it has never known the African linguistic and cultural side of the Biblical story (Steward, 2013).

The belief system in the ancient world did not have names – it was just a faith/a church of God (Steward, 2013). Thus, *Faithism* is a belief based on an idea that there is *One* Omnipotent Creator whose name is Jehovah, also referred to as Jah, Elohim, E-o-ih, Wenohim, Eolin, Egoquim, Ormazd, and many others. This belief system is as ancient as the creation of the first humans – Adam and Eve – who were under the guidance of the Creator until evil-minded mankind persuaded them to deviate from the laws given to them by the Almighty Jah.

It is also significant to take into consideration all the Biblical accounts about the origins of circumcision in order to better understand this rite with the Zulu people today, and their link with North Africa, as well as ancient faith in their way of life (Magama, 1998; Mthembu, 2009).

² Some of the hidden ancient black African knowledge systems are kept in various western knowledge archives and museums such as the Turin museum - *Museo Egizio* that I visited when I visited the University of Turin based in Turin, Italy in 2005 (Haynes, 2009:239; Mapara, 2009: 145).

Steward (2013) reveals that Africans wrote the Bible as well as the founding of Ancient Egypt though such accounts are rarely highlighted. It is also not known how these people, who later went to Europe to become the Jews and Hebrews, got there. It also remains untold about the Africans who actually wrote the documents of the Bible before Afrim, a Jewish scholar, who translated these documents for the Greeks in Ancient Egypt (*ibid*).

It is worth noting that the Ancient Egyptians were Black people, and their modern descendants are alive, scattered around the world including Africa (*Steward, 2013*). In other words, the true evidence of the modern descendants of the Ancient Egyptians in the tribes of Africa and the language and culture these people left behind in Ancient Egypt, is the most powerful proof of the origin of Black culture.

Although Africans veiled the first Bible, it was later reworked by various denominations and European king(s) to suit their respective interests, for instance, the Bible version that we know today as the King James Version (*Steward, 2013*). It is significant to note that the original faith of Egypt was already practiced by the apostles Mark, Matthew and Luke in 42AD in Ethiopia (Coptic Church – Coptic Orthodox Christianity) before the emergence of Christianity. Christianity emerged from Rome after fierce resistance from the authorities led to the execution of Jesus Christ – marking the beginning of a new religion called Christianity (*Steward, 2013; De Gruchy, 1995:57*).

Furthermore, Steward (2013) argues that Judaism is the African way of life, as it was the faith system developed in Africa by African people. For example, some African clans adopted and adapted in a similar fashion to the Yoruba Orisha Worship (Vodoun, Santeria, Lacumi, and Condomble), and the Lemba people from Southeast Africa in South Africa still practice the same old cultural traditions...traditions which continue to be co-opted and changed by non-Africans today. Therefore, to speak of an African influence on Judaism is like speaking of an African influence on Orisha Worship – it is not an African influence, but a

continuation of African faith and represents an African way of life (*ibid*).

On revisiting the word Israel, which itself is an Akan word (Ghana), Steward (2013) states that the story of Jacob in Genesis 32:24-29 cites the angel that renames Jacob, calling him Asrae or the European translation, Israel. In this case, Asrae depicts not the name of a nation, but instead means “the first one who is visited” (*ibid*).

Subsequently, the conman with his con plan raised the *ancestor worship* and *religious* belief systems with a view to winning as many souls as possible, misleading them to reach a state of calamity, and causing them to embalm their dead. To capture the reasoning in this art work, one has to first understand what is meant by the terms – *faith* and *religion*.

Faith refers to a state where one has a complete trust in something and also the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen – (*Hebrew 11*). The term religion is made up of two words – *re* and *l[i]egion* – *re* is a prefix meaning once more/afresh/anew, and *l[i]egion* refers to a division of men, especially in the Roman army, into large organised bodies. This shows how attempts have been made by human kind, especially the Western world, to down press the faith so that their will becomes the order of the day through the application of Xenophates’ doctrine of divide and rule via Zoroasters’ philosophy of religion (*De Gruchy, 1995*).

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the faith belief system was corrupted even further by the evil deeds of the Roman [c]ivilisation empire and her children under the auspices of today’s Europe through means of violence – that is, the well documented persecutions and killing of the saints of this faith as it is recorded in *The Book of Life*. Further attempts at corruption were made by the infusion of pagan practices with ancient faith traditions. This was achieved through the martyring of Yehoshua or Yoshua meaning, “Jehovah is Salvation”. Despite that, Saint Yehoshua/Christ was later portrayed and advocated as the symbol of a ghost (spiritual) spell (power/charm/gospel to wade

away evil spirits). In other words, he became the symbol of the power of the newly found Christian faith, which was later used as a forefront of the western colonisation mission spree, spearheaded by various denominations. For instance, in Nicean in the year 325AD, it was declared that the ancient faith be known as the Christian religion, following the theory of Zoroaster/Zarathustra (600/1000BC) (*Johnson, 1997:55*). This then replaced all faiths under the ancient World Order with Christianity, and elevated the New World Order through implementation of the Edict of Milan in AD313 (*De Gruchy, 1995:57*).

Later, religions were established on the foundation of pure ancient faith, which also became confounded with the worship of the sage, heroes or ancestors. Thus, the principles of ancient faith were rooted in abstinence from lying, stealing, adultery, drunkenness, indulgence in extravagant entertainment, feasting and theatrical performances. These ethics were to guide the disciples to ensure they always guarded against coarse language and indulgence, vanity and frivolous talk. In time, this new faith was forced on, and later accepted by, other people in the world, and though they made changes to it, it has been part of the highly contested “New World Order” from 4001BC to AD second score (*ibid*).

The rise then, of ancestor worship through spirits that are thought to interact with people, was given room to grow. People offered sacrifices and poured libations to the spirits to ward off difficulties. Community leaders consulted ancestral spirits for guidance. For instance, in Zimbabwe it is said *mhondoro* spirits helped determine the traditional leader’s succession to office. Chiefs and quarter heads of the Wimbum generally offer wine to the ancestors before they drink.

In addition to ancestral spirits who may bless or punish people, there are a host of other spirits who are mainly malicious. The *Kebra Nagast* (*The Book of the Glory of Kings of Ethiopia*) has been in existence for at least 1,000 years, and contains the history of the Solomonic line of kings in Ethiopia. It is regarded as the ultimate authority on the history of the

conversion of Ethiopians from the worship of the sun, moon, and stars to that of the God of Israel. While the final version of the *Kebra Nagast* is dated back to the first half of the 14th century CE,^[75] much of the content dates from the 6th century CE (*Saifullah & David, 2008*).

In the *Kebra Nagast*, the Queen of Sheba tells Solomon:

“The sun is worshipped according to the teachings of the fathers because the sun is said to be the king of the gods. There are some subjects who worship other things: some worship stones, and some worship wood (that is, trees), some worship carved figures, and some worship images of gold and silver. The sun is worshipped as he ‘cooketh our food, and moreover, he illuminates the darkness, and removeth fear’; we call him ‘Our King’, and who is called ‘Our Creator’, and who is worshiped as our God; for no man hath told us that besides him there is another god.”

It is interesting to note that the Queen of Sheba mentions sun-worshipping as the predominant form of worship during her time. However, along with sun-worshipping, there also existed other forms of worship in the Kingdom of Sheba. This is confirmed by inscriptional evidence that shows people from Sheba worshipped a variety of gods, which are pure appellations, with no defining nature and sex.

Specifically, with regard to the Queen of Sheba, Hubbard says:

A frequent appellation of God or Christ in the *KN* is the “Sun of Righteousness”. The source of this phrase is undoubtedly Malachi 3:20 (4:2 EOT), which is its sole occurrence in either Testament. The popularity of this term in the *KN* may well be caused indirectly by the fact that in pre-Christian days the sun was extensively worshipped in Ethiopia. In this regard Saifullah and David (2008) claim that even the *Kebra Negast* itself confirms to the prominence of solar-worshipping in the early history of the Ethiopians. Here the Queen of Sheba describes to Solomon how worshipping the sun as a king of gods was passed down from generation to generation.

The belief, then, in a Most High God was and still is widespread in

Africa, and can be witnessed at some of the practices carried out by various clans across the continent. For example, Zulu people believed in *Unkulunkulu*, the Most High, or *Inkosi Yezulu*, the Chief of the Sky. The Yoruba people believed in Olorun or Olodumare, King of the Sky; Wimbun believed in Nyui; Igbo believed in Chukwu; Dogon believed in Amma (*Mthembu, 2006, 2009*). The Zulus believe that in the beginning *Unkulunkulu* created people, male and female. He also created people of different colours and gave them their own dwelling places (*ibid*). Beliefs about God indicate that He is a transcendent and immanent being who not only controls the universe, but is responsible for all things and all human affairs.

In some beliefs, God is an androgynous being. Kuiye of the Batammaliba has both male and female genitals and is called “The Sun, Our Father and Our Mother”. In Zimbabwe, Mwari – the god of fertility – is also androgynous. Theologians John Mbiti, E. Bolaji Idowu, and Gabriel Setiloane have articulated African perspectives on God using Christian theological categories (*Daneel, 1998*). The divine hierarchy, divinities and spirits are ranked below God. This theoretical move has set up a complicated picture of the nature of gods and spirits, and remains a rich field for further exploration as these spirits and divinities are all subject to the authority of God and carry out His will.

COVENANT BETWEEN THE MOST HIGH AND PEOPLE

The practice of male genital mutilation is far older than recorded history. Certainly, it is far older than the Biblical account of Abraham (*Genesis 17*). It seems to have originated in Eastern Africa long before this time, and it is unlikely that circumcision was considered by the majority of people as a religious rite peculiar only to the Hebrews (*Lannon, Bailey, Fleischman, Kaplan, Shoemaker, Swanson, Coustan, 1999*). This is not so, but the great antiquity of the practice has obscured its real origin

and object. Strictly speaking, the term “circumcision” is applied to a nationally widespread operation for the ablation of the male prepuce (though a looser application of the term includes a simple incision of the prepuce), and two operations on the female genitals – clitoridectomy and ablation of the labia minora (*Pirie, 1927; Lannon et al, 1999*).



Figure 1: Ethiopian female circumcision

Source: May (2009)

While female circumcision has been comparatively rarely performed and will not be discussed here in detail, the operation on males is very common, not only among ancient people, but also among “highly” civilised males (*Pirie, 1927; Lannon et al, 1999*). Circumcision, however, as a therapeutic measure is a very modern thought, and does not have

a satisfactory explanation of its ultimate origin (*ibid*). A great deal has been written about the practice in ancient times, yet there is very little conclusive evidence and much speculation. It is a curious fact that few people practising this rite have any legend or theory as to its origin – they do it because their fathers before them did it. The sources of information are so meagre, that they failed to show many differing opinions regarding the origin of this rite (*Lannon et al, 1999*).

It is believed that the inception of this ritual was influenced for various reasons. Firstly, for hygienic purposes. It is documented that this explanation was given by Herodotus as the reason for Egyptians to practice this rite (*Lannon et al, 1999*). Primitive people also use this explanation as a general view that is highly implausible. Secondly, in hot countries the penis is exposed to disease resulting from the retention of smegma behind the glans. Therefore, “to cut around” was viewed as “to purify”, which originally was for hygienic considerations, but then became a religious observance. Its acceptance by the popular mind now is probably due to modern surgical and therapeutic reasons for it being carried out.

FORMATIVE ERA ACCOUNT

Though circumcision has been practiced for hundreds of years – and in this time has been characterised by the abandonment and changes according to various regions – it has also recently been in the headlines. A closer look at the symbolic content of circumcision might help to explain the peculiar disparity between male circumcision rates in Africa compared with other parts of the world. Though female circumcision is practiced in some parts of Africa, as mentioned earlier, it will not be discussed in-depth at this point. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that among those cultures who practice it, female circumcision is no less a status symbol than male circumcision.

Literature reveals that circumcision has been practiced in various parts of the world, including, ancient Africa, some of the islands of Polynesia, pre-Columbian South and Central America, and aboriginal Australia (*Kaicher & Swan, 2010:18; Lannon et al, 1999*).

Globally, the practice in most of these cultures appears to be a rite of initiation for adolescent boys (and sometimes girls, as in the case of the Kikuyu of Kenya and Sothos in South Africa), who are expected to undergo the procedure without anaesthetic and without recoil to demonstrate their solidarity with the tribe and their eligibility for marriage (*ibid*). Although some people argue that there are obvious medical benefits of circumcision, these benefits were probably not the initial justification for performing the procedure. In fact it was probably only discovered after the procedure that there was some religious, symbolic, or social significance (*ibid*).

This was confirmed by Herodotus after he visited ancient Egypt in 440BC and accounted that the Egyptian priests he met were circumcised – the mark of circumcision was associated with the priestly class and regarded as a sacred honour for only a chosen few. Nonetheless, in contrast, it is also suggested that at some point in Egyptian history, the mark of circumcision was associated with slavery and defilement. In addition, Kaicher and Swan (2010) concur that ancient Egyptians were famous for their defilement of captured slaves utilising various forms of mutilation, such as castration or the amputation of other appendages. Circumcision might have been considered a cost-effective way to permanently mark human property without the morbidity of a slave marked by some other mutilation (*Kaicher & Swan, 2010:18*). However, it has generally been acknowledged that there are various reasons that led the practice of circumcision to develop independently.

In the discourse of circumcision in the global era, it will be vital to revisit its epistemology. The historic background of the ritual of circumcision, especially male circumcision, shows that it has been practiced in various parts of the ancient world, including, South Sea

Islanders, Australian Aborigines, Sumatrans, Incas, Aztecs, Mayans and ancient Egyptians/Kemet (*WHO & UNAIDS, 2007*). Nevertheless, presently, other communities such as Jews, Muslims and many tribes in the East and Southern Africa, also keep the practice alive (*Doyle, 2005; Lannon et al, 1999*).

There are many different views when it comes to the rationale behind this practice. One view holds that this ritual came about due to the demands of surgical procedures (*Lannon et al, 1999*). Another suggests that circumcision emerged in the 20th century as a means to cure or prevent life threatening circumstances – no less than 100 conditions, including alcoholism, asthma, epilepsy, enuresis, hernia, gout, rectal failure, rheumatism and kidney disease (*ibid*).

Consequently, in 169 Before Common Era (BCE), the rite was temporarily banned when Antiochus occupied a temple in Jerusalem with his armed forces. Thereafter, European tribes such as the Greeks, Romans, Gauls and Celts abandoned the practice. Circumcision was associated with the Jews, and any person who committed a crime against the Jewish law – such as being naked in public – was regarded as being “uncircumcised” (*Doyle, 2005*). Furthermore, in the first century BCE a number of Jewish athletes were regarded as “uncircumcised” when they participated bare-footed in a Jerusalem athletic competition with visiting athletes (*Lannon et al, 1999*).

Doyle (2005) believes that although this practice has been around since before history was recorded, we depend largely on texts whose accuracy is questionable – for instance in the case of some Biblical references that cannot be taken literally. Doyle (2005) further sources a number of references to the Bible, referred to as the Jerusalem Conference, which was convened to settle disputes between the early Christians. But, the significance of this ritual to the Jews of that era cannot be overstated, as it symbolised the commitment to their faith, culture and nationhood (*ibid*). At the time, the gathering conceded that the Gospel was for everyone...and circumcision was not a prerequisite

to affiliate to, which influenced the present day practice of this faith (*ibid, p281*).

As important as circumcision is to Jews who honour Abraham as one of the founding fathers of the faith (and the first named person recorded in history as being circumcised), the practice of circumcision did not originate with either Abraham or his generation (*Doyle, 2005:279*). From an anthropological viewpoint Abraham’s worshipping of one god was highly significant, as it marked a move from polytheism to monotheism. Historians date this at around 1800BCE, clearly long after circumcision was introduced by the Sumerians and Semites. Scholars cannot agree on why Abraham and his tribe adopted the practice (*ibid*).

Furthermore, they were unlikely to have known of any association with carcinoma of the penis, as we do today, but we might speculate that, originating as it seems to have done in hot climates, it may have been adopted for reasons of hygiene, making it easier to clean away smegma that can be malodorous and a source of infection (*Lannon et al, 1999*). Some suggest that Abraham, and subsequently the Jews, adopted what was in effect a rite of passage into adulthood with all its responsibilities (*K’Aoko, 1986*). However, it is speculated that for the Jews, circumcision was originally a form of blood sacrifice analogous to the offerings of hair, customary amongst their neighbours, the Syrians (*Ngaloshe, 2000*). It is also argued that some of the indigenous groups in Southern Africa spill blood as a symbol of authority to transcend to the next level of community echelon(s) (*ibid*). For the Jews it became not a rite of passage into manhood, but a sign of a covenant, a solemn relationship with their God (*K’Aoko, 1986; Ngaloshe, 2000, Doyle, 2005:280; WHO & UNAIDS, 2007*).



Figure 2: An original oil painting depicting circumcision
Source: Doyle (2005)

How one's circumcision status might affect one's ability to hold political office might not be obvious to the foreign observer. We would argue that circumcision has always been, and continues to be, a potent status symbol, conferring both benefits and liabilities to those who have borne it throughout history (Kaicher & Swan, 2010; Momoti, 2002; Ngaloshe, 2000).

It has generally been accepted that the practice of circumcision developed independently for different reasons. As previously mentioned, the ancient Egyptians were known to have defiled captured slaves through various forms of mutilation, (*ibid*), and circumcision might have been a more cost-effective way to permanently mark human property without the morbidity (and, therefore, loss of productivity) of a slave marked by some other mutilation. However, during the Seleucid period, it became a mark of the recently disenfranchised. For those Jews who

were sympathetic with the Hellenic project, circumcision was viewed as an embarrassment and a mark of shame (1 Maccabees 1:14-16). Given the stigma that circumcision had brought with it, it is not surprising that some would wish to hide it (Kaicher & Swan, 2010:18).

Therefore, under Roman law, it was illegal for any citizen of the empire to be circumcised unless he was Jewish, and the penalty for breaking this law was usually death. The mark, therefore, would have had two very different meanings at the same time in history for two different classes of people (Pirie, 1927; Lannon et al, 1999). For the slave, it would have been an obvious symbol of shame and degradation, and for the master, it would have been a sacred religious symbol.

Then, in 18th century England, a unique combination of events occurred that led to the revival of circumcision – first it was seen as a public health measure, and then as a symbol representing wealth and status (*ibid*). This was more prevalent in the United States than anywhere else in the world, far more than in England, where it was reserved for the upper class (*ibid*).

What was once viewed as a public health measure became a symbol of American citizenship. It became a mark of distinction, separating those who were born in the United States from those who were not, those who were clean and well bred from those who were poor, foreign, and unhygienic (Lannon et al, 1999). Circumcision in the United States is interesting, because it has continued to be practiced with great frequency, even though the original justification for the procedure has been criticised (Lannon et al, 1999). By the early 20th century most American doctors understood the germ theory of disease and infection and had accepted it as rationale for the procedure (*ibid*). By the 1930s, they also understood that masturbation did not cause blindness, psychiatric disorders, or any of the other diseases that the Victorians had imputed to it (Kaicher & Swan, 2010:19).

The indigenous populace of Africa is composed of many tribes, each practicing ritual circumcision in their own way in well-defined territories

(Doyle, 2005:281). For discussion purposes, circumcision practices that have been revived today after a long period of suspension – especially among the Zulu people – are worth interrogating and exploring further. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal it was suspended for the whole Zulu tribe in the early 19th century at the height of glory under the charismatic leadership of its warrior King Shaka Zulu, though other Nguni clans such as amaXhosa in the region continued with this rite (Ngaloshe, 2000; Mthembu, 2006; Mthembu, 2009).

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that the Zulu clan prior to the reign of King Shaka, respected various growth stages of the young person, as Mthembu (2006:20) emphasised that:

“Okokuqala okufanele masikwazi ukuthi okhokho babefanisa ukukhula komntwana nokukhula kombila wona okhula ngamalunga. Ngokunjalo umntwana wayeba namalunga noma amabanga okukhula. Ukusuka kwelinye ibanga engena kwelinye kwakuba nomkhosi obalulekile, kwenziwe isiko elithize”.

To this effect, there were various stages that had related activities or rites that were followed to mark the growth until reaching adult life: the first stage is the birth of a child rites, then home based training that includes herding chicken, cattle, other livestock as well as related responsibilities, and finally the reaching of age – puberty and circumcision that was practiced in exclusion from the main community, where they were not only taught about adult responsibilities, but also about *ukuhlobonga*³ – how to satisfy sexual desires without the outcome of pregnancy (Magama, 1998; Mthembu, 2006:33; Mthembu, 2009). Although King Shaka is known to be the last person to nullify this rite in preparation for his politically related military manoeuvres. Although he finalised its end, it was already fading in times of his preceding kings such as Jama and Senzangakhona. To this effect, King Shaka introduced

³ Sexual intercourse practices such as non-penetrative sex, long practiced by Nguni people.

the alternative rite of *“ukuqhatha”* (Mthembu, 2006:33).

Although there are contested origins of circumcision, the duration of circumcision ceremonies vary from region to region (Wagner, 1949:337; Nkosi, 2005). In Southern Africa, abeSuthu and amaXhosa ceremonies normally last about a month in each year, while in West and Central Africa ceremonies are held every three or four years, and candidates are aged from as young as 12 to as old as 22 years or even older. Again, the age depends on local group preferences, pressure to initiate more warriors⁴, and the freedom given to potential candidates to decide whether to participate or to wait for a school at a later date (*ibid*). Although the right to decide when to partake is usually a personal one, if a boy persistently refuses to partake in the ritual, his father or his circumcised brothers eventually catch him to be circumcised by force – especially if he is the eldest son (WHO & UNAIDS, 2007:20). However, Junod (1962) concludes that the purpose of the school is to “introduce the little boy into manhood, to cleanse him from the *inkwenkwe*, and to make him a full member and man of the community” (Marck, 1997:354; Nkosi, 2005; Ngaloshe, 2000:76).

Elders are said to decide on the calling and arranging of the next school session in any given year, and considerable time and resources then become involved (Nkosi, 2005). Although there are different phases before the actual ceremony takes place, which depend solely on a particular community, there are three observable phases which are universal to all. The first phase consists of preparatory observances by the candidates, leading up to the actual ritual. The second phase comprises the life of the *abakhwetha*⁵ at *ekhankasini/ibhoma/iphempe*⁶, where

⁴ Most Bantu groups that had initiation schools required that men wishing to participate in warfare be already initiated (warrior status was normally defined in terms of having been initiated).

⁵ Boys going through a rite.

⁶ The hut of isolation where circumcision takes place.

they stay while they are instructed in both practical and theoretical knowledge of adult life (Ngaloshe, 2000:43). During this period they live under the care and guidance of *ikhankatha*⁷ assisted by various tutors who “instruct them both in general knowledge and in the particular ritual observances which are demanded from the initiates” (Wagner, 1949; Marck, 1997:354; Nkosi, 2005; Ngaloshe, 2000:76). *Abafana*⁸, who have already been through circumcision school, supervise the candidates by teaching them traditional songs which will be performed when they re-enter the community (Marck, 1997:354).

Wagner (1949) argues that in the days after circumcision, medicines made from plants are used partly to promote healing, and to prevent infectious disease from forming. Infections are rare, as after several hundred boys had been circumcised, not a single case of death or serious illness is experienced (Marck, 1997:356; Mthembu, 2006:37). The third and final phase begins with the “feast of coming out of the hut of isolation”, and the candidates become *amakrwala* (Figure 3). This is followed by a series of further rites and festive occasions. During this period, they continue to use the special huts (Figure 4) until the final coming out day (Marck, 1997:354; Nkosi, 2005).

7 The principal of the circumcision school.

8 This term is normally used by Xhosa people referring to males who have undergone the same ritual processes.



Figure 3: Newly initiate – *amakrwala*



Figure 4: A typical circumcision house – *iphempe*
(a house/lodge of isolation)

Some indigenous people have continued with their own initiation ceremonies till today. For instance, for both abeSuthu and amaXhosa boys, circumcision is still considered to be a rite of passage into manhood as well as a trial of bravery and a blood sacrifice (Doyle, 2005:282; Nkosi, 2005). However, around Southern Africa there seems to be more abandonment of initiation schools (and circumcision) – in particular in Botswana, Malawi and Swaziland during the times of civil war or warfare, as well as for other reasons. And the re-institution of the schools varies from region to region within the African continent (WHO & UNAIDS, 2007:5). The Zulu tribe in Southern Africa suspended the ritual due to civil war (*imfecane*), and their revival of this practice has been achieved by “borrowing” practices of neighbouring/foreign people rather than reviving their own previous practices (Marck, 1997:350; WHO & UNAIDS, 2007:10).

Presently, there is no instruction and introduction to adult responsibility as was the norm. Social conditions seem to promote circumcision performed in government clinics and mission hospitals, and this contributes to the loss of inculcation of responsible citizenship. Some mission hospitals compensate for this loss by offering circumcision by only male doctors under sterile conditions, while teaching males about STDs, HIV/AIDS and “adult responsibilities” based on social material conditions (Doyle, 2005). Even the treatment of possible infection tends to follow modern medical practices, i.e. by using anaesthesia and injection to dampen pains and usage of various pastes that are applied and covered with an occlusive cloth or rag to facilitate healing. This practice tends to differ from the ancient methods that utilised medication made out of mixture of different tree leaves, barks and ash powder of various plants including *isichwe* and *swadi* that were applied and then covered with special plant leaves for immediate pain termination and healing purposes (*ibid*, p283).

Thus, various literatures such as the Old Testament, Egyptian monuments, and the writings of early historians – which were

undoubtedly influenced by the traditions and belief system of the people among whom they lived – are our only sources of information on the subject (Pirie, 1927; WHO & UNAIDS, 2007). For nearly 4,000 years the Hebrews have claimed that it was a divine institution in the beginning, and that the Chaldeans, Phoenicians, Egyptians and others copied the practice from them (*ibid*).

It is argued that ancient Egyptians associated circumcision with an evolution of the phallic worship instituted by Isis after the tragic end of her husband, Osiris. The earliest direct evidence of Egyptian circumcision goes back to the discovery at Saqqara of an authentic representation of the operation dating from the VIth dynasty (Pirie, 1927; WHO & UNAIDS, 2007:3).



Figure 5: Ancient Egyptian relief from Ankhmahor, Saqqara, Egypt (2345-2182BC), depicting adult circumcision ceremony
Source: WHO and UNAIDS (2007:3)

In it, the boy is standing before the a surgeon/priest, his hands securely

held in front of his eyes by a man behind him (*WHO & UNAIDS, 2007*). According to the writings within the Egyptian tomb and wall paintings dating from around 2300BC, the a surgeon/priest said, “Hold him that he may not faint away”, and the assistant replied, “Do your best”. The a surgeon/priest kneeling in front of the boy does his best with a small, oval-shaped blade, probably made from stone or flint (*ibid; Pirie, 1927*).

The main argument of the Hebrews is that their rite was an independent custom which they practiced when a boy was eight days old, while the Egyptian rite was performed at puberty. Nevertheless, it is said the first Jew to be circumcised was Ishmael, the son of Abraham, who was operated on at the age of 13 (*Pirie, 1927*).

Perhaps the spread of ancient faith might have influenced the practice spreading to other parts of the world such as Asia, Australia and America. It is probable that Africa influenced other parts of the world including Asia, as earlier priests such as Paul and Mark visited Europe preaching the ancient faith in Rome and other parts of Europe (*Pirie, 1927*). Pirie (1927) further suggests that evidence reveals that in very early times there was a land connection between the two hemispheres. Perhaps, names such as Gondwanaland and Gondola become more relevant when we attempt to gain a better understanding of the ancient world geographic spatiality. Other circumstances, besides circumcision, shows that there must have been some form of interlink. For example, various parts of the world such as Americas, Asia- i.e. India and China bear almost the same pyramid structures that are found in Africa along the Nile River at Giza (*WHO & UNAIDS, 2007: 12*). (*WHO & UNAIDS, 2007: 12*). Thus it is probable that the early people in the Western world copied the rite of circumcision from what we call the ancient world (*ibid*).

CHAPTER 4



“Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it”

– Fanon, F, 1990:166

ETYMOLOGY: THE WORD USED FOR CIRCUMCISION

It's worth highlighting that many attempts have been made by various people to study the etymology of the word used for circumcision to learn its meaning and importance. Basically, the word relates to other words referring to the preparation for the marital state, with corresponding words meaning “to purify”. It can be maintained that this meaning tends to apply to the later religious application of the rite only.

For example, the most rudimentary form of circumcision is a simple gash in the prepuce. In Tonga and among certain African tribes, it is torn with the fingers, a mussel shell, or a splinter of bamboo. The Marolongs

of South Africa formerly used a fire stone, that is, a meteorite, but now use a spear. Other tribes in the north of Africa – such as the Somali and Kikuyu – make a single cut through the dorsum of the prepuce and extend it into the glans, whilst the Tartars remove a wedge-shaped piece from the prepuce (*cf. Naidoo, 2012; K'Aoko, 1986*).



Figure 6: Trainee prepares red ochre with a stone

Certain tribes not only ablate the prepuce, but also make an incision in the skin on the dorsum of the penis throughout its entire length, and remove a piece of skin from the abdomen. Jewish circumcision is much different, as in the early days they simply removed a portion of the prepuce. Some tribes from Israel, not wishing to appear different from their uncircumcised neighbours, performed an operation upon what was left of the prepuce to make it appear longer, and this became the justification for the need of the circumcision (*Pirie, 1927*).

It therefore became imperative that the mucous membrane should

be split and stripped from the glans so it should lie bare. According to this regulation, if any fringes of the foreskin remain, the operation is inefficacious. In central Australia the operation was originally performed with a fire stick, but owing to the high mortality, probably from septicaemia, this was replaced with a stone knife (Figure 7). Some of the Hindus use a wooden knife in the mock ceremony which represents the ritual survival of Mahomedan circumcision (*Pirie, 1927:1541*). In South Africa at the moment, there seems to be various methods of operation, as well as a choice of instruments to perform it.



Figure 7: Traditional circumcision practice

DEFINITION OF CIRCUMCISION

In contemporary times, the definition of terminology is constantly changing, and the concept of circumcision is no exception. According to

an international reader's dictionary, circumcision is the "cutting off of the loose skin covering the end of the male sex organ".

The foreskin is a continuation of skin from the shaft of the penis that covers the glans penis and the urethral meatus (Figure 8). The foreskin is attached to the glans by the frenulum, a highly vascularised tissue of the penis, which forms the interface between the outer and inner foreskin layers, and when the penis is erect, it tightens to narrow the foreskin opening (K'Aoko, 1986; Mthembu, 2006; 2009).

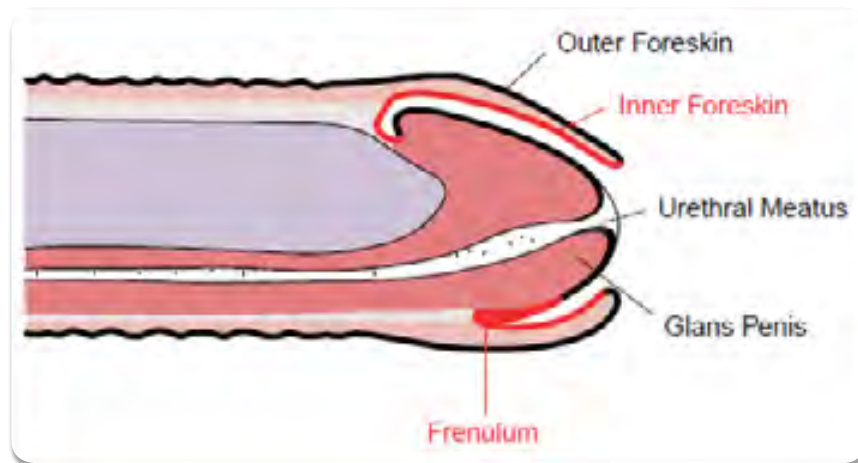


Figure 8: Flaccid uncircumcised penis

Source: WHO and UNAIDS (2007)

Therefore, circumcision removes some, or all, of the foreskin from the penis. The word "circumcision" comes from the Latin *circumcidere* (meaning "to cut around") (WHO & UNAIDS HIV/AIDS, 2007:13). The "circumcision" means the circumcision of a person as part of a traditional practice (Act, 2004). Ngaloshe (2000:25) argues that failed initiation relates to terms of the "theory of criminality", as it is meant to change boys who are intrinsically wild, into responsible men. Mbiti (1969:216) highlights that a "new" and rapid beat is sounding from the

drums of science and technology through modern communication and mass media, schools and universities, cities and towns for African youth. These new identities threaten the traditional societal life, resulting in some of the traditions being discarded. This then raises a concern – it is a well known fact that a society without a culture does not exist. Ngaloshe (2000) argues that forces of change cannot be rejected even though they are threatening the societal life. For example, in many families there are parents who are essentially "traditional" and depend on the "oral" transmission of their cultural values to their children who are schooled in foreign ideals and literate.

To accommodate the needs of the different members of such a family group living under the same roof with one threatening the other, it becomes necessary to change the "form" of the ritual, but not the "ritual" itself. It is essential that the present generation be conscientised so that they can identify and critically engage with the ritual, find meaning in it, and be proud of being African (*ibid*, p27). The coming-of-age is one of the homologically and sociological "milestones" of life and is normally marked by some form of initiation. Most cultures celebrate these homologically and sociological "milestones" – namely, birth, naming, coming-of-age, marriage and death (*ibid*).

TYPES OF MALE CIRCUMCISION

There are four types of circumcision: the foreskin (prepuce) is completely removed exposing the whole glans of a flaccid penis; the frenulum is snipped but the foreskin left intact (practised in some Pacific Islands and Africa, i.e. the KwaZulu-Natal narratives of ukuqhatha); the foreskin is cut, some of it removed and the remainder left as one or two lateral flaps of loose skin; described not as circumcision but as "subincision" – the foreskin is removed and, with a thin stick inserted into the urethra to keep it open, an incision is then made in the under surface of the penis

near the base of its shaft, in effect making a urethral fistula. Sometimes another stick is inserted through the penis at this point and left in to maintain the fistula. The result is that urine can be evacuated via the external meatus of the fistula (Doyle, 2005:279).

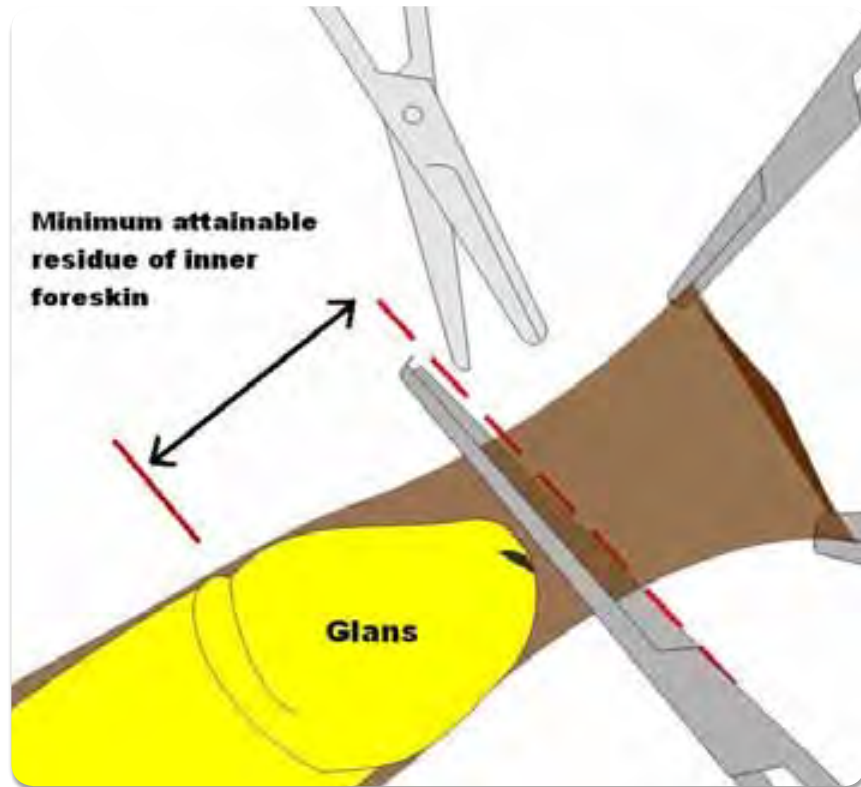


Figure 9: Illustrations of the “Tug-and-Chop” method,
the Forceps Guided method

Source: Forceps Guided method

Figure 9 illustrates how the foreskin is pulled forward using small clamps, with the extent of the traction determining the tightness of the resulting circumcision. A large pair of forceps (typically artery forceps)

is then clamped across the foreskin at the place where the cut is to be made. Optionally, the smaller clamps are then removed before a scalpel is run across the top of the forceps. This method doesn’t automatically result in a straight smooth line and there is no pre-sealing of the cut edges. Sometimes bleeding is more profuse and additional stitches may be required than with other methods, especially in adults. This method of cutting resembles the scalpel and shield method used in a Jewish baby’s Bris (Forceps Guided method). There is also a subincision that entails cutting on the ventral portion of the penile urethra, sometimes from the glans to the scrotum (Montagu, 1991; Mthembu, 2006:18).

CHAPTER 5



“Yes, also to the Gentiles, since, there is only one God who will justify the circumcised on the basis of faith and the uncircumcised by that same faith”

— Romans 3:30

RATIONALE FOR THE REVIVAL OF CIRCUMCISION

Firstly, since the time of the Egyptian dynasties, circumcision has been suggested as an effective method of maintaining penile hygiene. However, there is little evidence to support the connection between circumcision and optimal penile hygiene. One study revealed that appropriate hygiene significantly decreased the incidence of phimosis, adhesions, and inflammation, though it did not eliminate all problems (Lannon *et al*, 1999:686). Other theories explain circumcision as the origin of genital mutilation. For example, one theory suggests that

circumcision began as a way of “purifying” individuals and society by reducing sexuality and sexual pleasure. In some societies human sexuality was seen as dirty or impure, hence cutting off the pleasure-producing parts was the obvious way to “purify” someone (*ibid*).

As it is known that the male foreskin, or prepuce, is the principal location of erogenous sensation in the human male, its removal substantially reduces this sensation. In specific cultural context, circumcision is revealed as a sacrifice of “sinful” human enjoyment (in this earthly life), for the attainment of holiness in the afterlife (*Blessing, 2000*).

In addition to this, several reasons exist for considering the theory that circumcision prepares a male for the marital state. For example, two Arabian words having the same root meaning – firstly, “to circumcise”, and secondly, “to become akin to someone through his wife”. This was significant in encouraging the widespread practice of the operation at or before the age of puberty. Africans, Central and South Americans, Mexicans, Hindus, Turks and Mahommedans, all performed the rite at ages varying from two to 12, with a few isolated cases in East Africa where it was performed as late as the 17th year (*Blessing, 2000*).

The Hebrews remain the only exception who circumcise and name their boys on the eighth day after their birth, even though there is some evidence that the rite was at one time performed much later and had some relation to the preparation for marriage. For instance, Genesis 34, narrates the refusal of Jacob to allow his daughter, Dinah, to wed Shechem the Hittite, until he had been circumcised. And again in Exodus 4, in almost the same way, even the son of Moses was not circumcised until he was quite a lad. And again, in Joshua 5, the story reveals how all the young men born in the wilderness were circumcised. Thus such operations were performed at Gilgal and marked the end of the people of Israel blaming the Egyptians. It has been argued that from this point onwards the priority of the Egyptian practice of the rite was formed (*Pirie, 1927*).

Lastly, circumcision is also related to a test of endurance among some

tribes, especially in Arabia and Africa. It is argued that the subject being operated on is required to hold in his hand a lance with the butt resting on his foot. He must not show the slightest expression of pain or the least quiver of the lance (*ibid*). This is illustrated by the people of the Loango coast, as the expression of pain on the part of the victim will be a sign of weakness on his intended bride who is present at the ceremony, and breaks the engagement. However, some argue that circumcision does not make the best endurance. It was simply one of the trials the young man had to undergo before entering upon man's estate, when he would be permitted to bear arms and sit in council. The fact that it was a form of sacrifice seems to explain the practice among the Americans, especially the Mexicans, and various people of Africa (*WHO & UNAIDS, 2007*).

PICTURES OF SOME OF THE CIRCUMCISION RITES OF VARIOUS AFRICAN NATIONS



Figure 10

Figure 10: Kenya – Masai Moran circumcision ceremony

Source: Rodger, George (1979)



Figure 11

Figure 11: Kenya – Bukusu circumcision rite

Source: <http://www.nation.co.ke/-/1148/445878/-/15no8vc/-/index.html>



Figure 12: Circumcision ceremony in eastern Uganda

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/3152733/Circumcision-ceremony-in-eastern-Uganda.html>



Figure 13: Lesotho initiates celebrate their graduation

Source: Marinovic h(n.d.)



Figure 14: Eastern Cape initiates (South Africa)

Source: Feni (2012)

In earlier times, the man himself was offered as a sacrifice and later on, that was simply replaced by using a form of sacrifice that only used certain parts of a person or the spilling of his blood in the way that was seen as an acceptable manner. In a later period, it is believed that other nations performed a mock ceremony of circumcision with a wooden knife. So, if the rite was an evolution of phallic worship in Egypt, the sacrificial character of the ceremony is evident. Certainly among the Hebrews the practice appeared to have had this significance. The circumcision of Gershon, the son of Moses, referred to in Exodus 4, seems to have been performed with the hope of ransoming his father from the wrath of Jehovah; although another interpretation of this incident is the influence of Moses' Midianite wife, among whose people the boys were circumcised when they reached puberty.

Pirie (1927), Mthembu (2006) and Mthembu (2009) have noted that in a substantial number of cases, circumcision appears to be initiatory in character, whether as a preparation for the married state, an effort to

prevent sexual peril, a test of endurance, or a tribal mark – all these factors are necessary for the complete life of manhood. The rite would naturally be performed when reaching puberty, but the realisation among some of the natives that the operation became more painful and more dangerous the longer it was delayed, resulted in the gradual lowering of the age at which it was performed (*ibid*).

Apparently there is no one reason which will satisfactorily explain circumcision in all instances. Even the plea that it was hygienic cannot explain the practice among primitive peoples. Furthermore, it is argued, that to the primitive mind all matters connected with the reproductive functions are essentially connected with religion, and all rites of initiation are primarily religious. All this suggests is that circumcision in its inception and late into its development was basically faith related, connected with sacrifice and sacredness (Pirie, 1927:1542).

Some have suggested that circumcision was associated with a mark of cultural identity, akin to a tattoo or a body piercing. For example, among the ancient Egyptians and Aztecs it was known as a mark of social distinction, as it was only the ritual priests and leaders who were circumcised. Alternatively, there are reasons to believe that the ritual evolved as a fertility rite. For example, that some global tribal cultures apportion “seasons”, and both the male and female operations support the view that circumcision developed as a sacrifice to the gods, an offering in exchange for a good outcome such as harvest/good luck/protection (*ibid*). Dunsmuir and Gordon (1999) highlighted that this theory would appear reasonable as the penis is undoubtedly inhabited by powers that produce life. Certainly, this is evident in other parts of the world. For instance in Nicaragua, in relation to good harvests, it is found that blood from the operations is mixed with maize to be eaten during the ceremony. Although the true origins of circumcision remain a mystery, it is likely that the truth lies in part with all of the theories described here (*ibid*).



Figure 15: Initiates during maize-eating ceremony
Source: Feni (2012)

UNIVERSAL CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT

Since every child is born with the wisdom of its body and of its mind, it strives to develop and grow in an environment that satisfies its basic behavioural needs, as well as in physical and mental health – the ability to love, to work, to play, and to think critically (Pirie, 1927). However, this ability has been confused and manipulated by adults who have never consulted the child except to impose rituals on them, their own adult limitations, and their will upon the child (*ibid*). Various historical records associated with the Old Stone Age or Paleolithic Perigordian phase of culture of the Pyrenees, and dating back some 25,000 years, show evidence to this fact. Nevertheless, such mutilations have been not prevalent among indigenous peoples today. The story of bodily mutilations would occupy a large volume in the story of humankind, and

few would be more strange and interesting than those relating to male and female circumcision (Pirie, 1927).

Gollaher (1994) argues that notwithstanding the relative disinterest over the function of the prepuce, no other operation has been surrounded by so much controversy as circumcision. Religious and cultural influences are persistent, and widespread parental limitations that is revealed by a medical, indicates a change with the trends of the day (*ibid*). Nonetheless, as doctors are divided into several camps driven by self-interest, self-righteousness and self-defence, this has opened a general view to revive the mutilating procedure of even females – a clitoridectomy – where the clitoris is subjected to a variety of surgeries, manipulations and chemical preparations. In addition, these practices were sustained in America long after they had fallen out of favour in Europe (Gollaher, 1994; Pirie, 1927).

Others suggested that no one had tabulated the incidence of congenital phimosis as a percentage of all male births (Gollaher, 1994; Pirie, 1927). It was argued further that “a long and contracted foreskin” was always seen as a source of “secondary complications”, necessitating the correction of a deformity as a precautionary measure – despite the fact that there were no symptoms in this regard. Gollaher (1994) argues that Christians stand to learn something from Jews, for instance: “Moses was a good sanitarian and observed that, and if circumcision was more generally practised today, I believe we would hear far less of the pollutions and carelessness concerning youth; and that our daily papers would not be so profusely flooded with all kinds of incidents that relates to the loss of manhood.”

Chapman’s language, on the other hand, captures an important transition in thought as he argues that circumcision was not exclusively a means of alleviating reflex irritation, but as a preventive, hygienic measure (*ibid*). New grounds for the procedure were important if it were to gain wider acceptance, because reflex theory that was long debated in some quarters had fallen under increasing assault. For example, in 1881, the New York Neurological Society highlighted that, “in not one of the cases of reflex paralysis supposed to be dependent upon genital

irritation, which have thus far been published, is there conclusive proof of this relation of cause and effect" (*Gollaher, 1994*).

Furthermore, Gollaher (1994) in his final analysis resolved that, whether it be curative or not it is conservative, and removes one source of irritation from an exquisitely sensitive organ. He would favour circumcision, independent of existing disease, as a sanitary precaution for the following reasons:

- ▶ The exposure of the glans to friction, and so on, hardens it, and renders it less liable to abrasion in sexual intercourse, and consequently venereal ulcers.
- ▶ It is acknowledged to be useful in preventing masturbation.
- ▶ It certainly renders the accident of phimosis and paraphimosis impossible.
- ▶ It prevents the retention of sebaceous secretion and consequent balanitis.
- ▶ It probably promotes continence by diminishing the development of the sexual appetite. And its performance surely settles forever the question of reflex trouble as to that particular cause (*Gollaher, 1994*).

However, the phrase "sanitary precaution" used in this passage is mixed up with a variety of physical – and more significantly – moral, social and cultural values (*ibid*). One method of unravelling these connotations has been suggested by the historical study that is associated with manners, habits and personal behaviour. Gollaher (1994) quotes other scholars like Lawrence Wright and Richard L. Bushman who have endeavoured to track the development and explain the significance of common behaviour such as spitting, farting and bathing, and states that thus far it has scarcely had an historical value (*Gollaher, 1994*). Though

cleanliness is of paramount importance, the sanitary reform is viewed within the ambit of public health that has been studied extensively, while sanitary reform on the personal level has received less attention. This also influenced Americans in the 19th century to revisit their major efforts towards cleaning up the urban environment which led to drastic changes in the standards of personal cleanliness (*ibid*).

Gollaher (1994) further argues that this tended to offer the Americans a new approach to John Wesley's famous statement which suggests that cleanliness is next to godliness. Gradually the entire society ended up identifying personal cleanliness with good morals, sound health and upright character (*ibid*). Towards the end of the Victorian era – an age obsessed with racial and social hierarchies – there was a fascination to rank civilisations, peoples and social groups from clean to dirty. Gradually this was used by the middle class as a sign of moral judgment and confirmation of material prosperity: cleanliness became an indicator for control, spiritual alteration and breeding, while the unclean were regarded as vulgar, coarse and animalistic. In summary, cleanliness became a crucial measurement of social respectability; while dirt was viewed as immoral, and thus a social, hazard whose dangers people would strive diligently to avoid (*Gollaher, 1994:23*).

The changing cultural significance of cleanliness provided a context for understanding the popular acceptance of circumcision. However, it failed to explain why, if people were newly attentive to genital hygiene, in this instance surgery replaced soap and water. Most other industrial nations, at different epochs, underwent transformations in personal cleanliness without resorting to routine circumcision. For example, most tribes of Western Europe better understood that the standards of cleanliness merely meant washing more thoroughly and more often. In other words what transpired in America and England in 1877, was concerning the reconsideration of what was viewed as clean and dirty (*Gollaher, 1994*).

At the turn of the 20th century, a debate among historians ensued

on medicine, ideas and activities that defined public health. Other view suggested this period was a watershed, a time when the focus of health shifted from the environment to the individual, from the control of public health laymen to physicians who, in turn, became ever more specialised (*ibid*). For the sake of the authority and prestige of the medical profession, the theory that suggested that diseases were spread by microbes was viewed as a godsend. This implied that only specialised physicians could master the wonders of the invisible realm of bacteriology. The medics concern proved to be more about the status of their profession and keenness to build private practices, which was drastically reduced in the 1890s as they displayed declining enthusiasm for conventional, environmentally-based public health activities (Gollaher, 1994:24).

Evidence from later studies revealed that there was no smooth transition in this regard. On the subject of the germ theory, its concern appeared to have caused a great deal of confusion within the medical fraternity. Initially, few doctors had sufficient scientific training to understand the new theory, and even those who did had limited understanding of how to apply it to individual patients. This was evident when physicians responded to the violent epidemic of polio that swept through the United States of America just before World War I, and reflects a history of intellectual confusion and disorder in the face of danger. However, despite the fact that the virus and its means of transmission were not understood, public health officials were determined to act forcefully. They passed collective policies based on sanitation, personal hygiene, and exclusion of infected patients. Confused by a mysterious disease, doctors relied on whatever tools they had, seldom stopping to ascertain whether or not their methods were effective (*ibid*).



Figure 16: Blood testing

Source: AFSA, (2011)

All in all, surgery was viewed as the most potent weapon in the medical armamentarium, and it found a new and important role in public health. Germ phobia attempted to help explain why, at the end of the century, one sees a popular fixation on the dirt associated with the bodily functions of human beings: their excrement, urine, blood and other secretions. Irrespective of their function, even healthy genital organs were associated with “dirty” waste products of the body. Accordingly, they were often found dirty by association, a prejudice betrayed in the manner physicians described genitalia. At the beginning of 1890 medical writers adopted the habit of portraying the penis as though it were basically a source of contamination, using a term that had formerly been reserved for contagious diseases. A physician named Jonathan Young Brown went so far as to label smegma “infectious material” (Gollaher, 1994).

On the other hand, Gollaher (1994) claims that it seems Brown did not to realise the word “smegma” was derived from Greek and Latin words for cleansing and soap, and argues that from this viewpoint, circumcision should be considered preventive medicine and practiced universally as a matter of public health. Remondino celebrated Sayre as “the Columbus of the prepuce” and a scientific explorer who reached “this territory [which] Hippocrates and Galen overlooked” (*ibid*).

Remondino spent most of the time studying his magnum opus, *History of Circumcision*. Despite its title the book offers much less history than polemic. Remondino argues that the author knew full well that patients willingly submitted to surgery in cases of injury or distress; “but such a thing as surgery to remedy a seemingly medical disease,” he wrote, “or what might be called the preventive practice of surgery, is something they cannot understand (Gollaher, 1994).

According to Remondino’s “facts” that appeared to be a rambling, slapdash collection of folklore, conjecture, opinion, and pseudo-science, Gollaher (1994) argues that Remondino was hardly a scientist anymore than he was an historian. He was also highly schooled in the Darwin theory which argues for the notion that the foreskin was a primitive vestige of the evolutionary past. In addition, it also argued that the improvement in a man’s condition and his gradual evolution will eventually lead him into a higher sphere. Furthermore, Remondino emphasises the fact that the prepuce became an unnecessary, hated thing. This necessitated the imitation of an ancient Hebrew ritual, which was viewed as a strange innovation for a nation as dedicated to its image as a Christian people (*Pirie, 1927*). This era marked the point where the medical profession began to draw a sharp distinction between ritual and medical circumcision.

Since the early 1890s, physicians were encouraged to perform circumcision frequently when a male was born, which coincided with an attack on the Jewish rite of Berith Milah or Bris because it was considered as primitive, unsanitary and potentially dangerous (*Pirie,*

1927). However, in 1894 the Medical Society’s official publication had the opinion that “circumcision is a relic of barbarous and semi-civilised times, before soap and water and sanitation had been preached” (*ibid*). Therefore, it is suggested that currently physicians should cease to preach or to impose upon their patients an unnecessary and irrational mutilation procedure. These opinions were distinctly from minority groups, with the exception of some literature that favoured circumcision, and saw the publishing dozens of papers commending the benefits of the operation and promoting new surgical techniques.

In order to persuade healthy men to submit to having their foreskins cut off and or for parents to make the decision on behalf of their children, surgeons needed to convince them that circumcision was a minor procedure, neither dangerous nor unduly painful. So, there are two major arguments that need to be considered in this regard, *a theoretical* and *a technological* framework that enabled this case to be argued with increasing plausibility (*Pirie, 1927*).

When looking at the initial work on a bacterium that was published in the 1860s and later revisited by American doctors towards conducting aseptic surgery (*ibid*), the germ concept encourages the movement toward antisepsis and asepsis (*Gollaher, 1994*). Hospital contamination was no longer the deadly hazard in 1890, and was later improved on by the medical world’s early stages of an unprecedented boom in surgery. This medical boom was concentrated on surgery within the hospital operating room of which was championed by Lewis Sayre – the man who pioneered circumcision surgery for paralysis in the early 1870s, at a time when there were fewer than 200 hospitals in the United States (*Pirie, 1927*).

What is remarkable is that 40 years later there were more than 4,000 hospitals, of which more than half were for-profit ventures owned by physicians (*ibid*). The historian Rosenberg noted that the modern hospital was beginning to be viewed as the only ethical place to practice an increasingly demanding art (*Gallaher, 1994*).

Back in England in 1945, circumcision experiences before World War II led to the institution of a system of universal medical coverage under the National Health Services that resembles the American approach (*ibid*). Nonetheless, due to various reasons and failure, British doctors reached a consensus as to whether or not it was medically efficient. Subsequently, circumcision was dropped from the list of specialist services.

Then in 1963, circumcision surgery was accepted by practitioners for its power to “‘relieve’ phimosis, to ‘prevent’ infection, to be ‘prophylaxis’ against carcinoma”, though it did not attract interest from scientists in the medical research establishment. For the next couple of years, though, the biomedical community remained divided, and engaged in debates about the procedure. It is worth noting that their arguments represented a weird mixture of epidemiology, opinion, prejudice, and cultural speculation. For example, critics of circumcision viewed it, as “the rape of the phallus” (*ibid*).

Furthermore, Gallaher (1994) highlights that in 1969 a thoughtful critique appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in an article entitled “Ritualistic Surgery – Circumcision and Tonsillectomy”. In it, a paediatrician emphasised that there was insufficient evidence to justify any surgery as a preventive measure, and that cutting in the absence of disease violated the most cherished tenet of medical ethics, *primum non nocere* (first, do no harm principle).

More systematically, another paediatrician reviewed the major medical literature on circumcision and concluded that none of the substantial medical benefits associated with it can be considered as the primarily prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and cancers of the penis and prostate. The best that could be said about the operation, he concluded, was that “circumcision is a beautification comparable to rhinoplasty”. Due to the lack of compelling data to the contrary in this regard, in 1971, the *American Academy of Pediatrics* formally concluded that there were no medical grounds for routine infant circumcision, a

decision that was reconfirmed four years later (*Gollaher, 1994*).

Then, at the turn of the 19th century, infant circumcision enjoyed a vogue acceptance in the West – it became a ritual in the United States of America for health reasons, as it was claimed by some to be good in preventing penile and cervical carcinoma infections (*ibid*). Furthermore, other regions in the world – such as Korea – started experiencing an increase in the numbers of circumcised. In the US about one million were circumcised annually, and in Korea 90% of high school boys were circumcised. Both countries attributed the rise to the link between uncircumcised and fungal and bacterial infections noticed in the Vietnam and Korean wars. Nonetheless, this notion was further advocated by the various agencies in the USA and numerous websites dedicated either to making it even more popular, or to discouraging and condemning it despite the a large number of opposition to this effect for example, the National Organisation to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males (NO HARM), the National Organisation of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC), and the International Organisation Against Circumcision Trauma (INTACT) (*ibid, p283*).

After 1900 the realisation that the notion of reflex did not invalidate circumcision, opened the door for other theories. In the 1990s, masses of freshly available epidemiological data enabled advocates of circumcision to formulate unimagined hypotheses. Ironically, but predictably so in the context of the history of medical arguments for circumcision, some doctors have assumed that removing the foreskin may protect men from the most dreaded epidemic of the post-modern world – human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Using retrospective data (the epidemiological equivalent of empiricism) from a venereal disease clinic in Kenya, for example, researchers observed that there were higher rates of HIV infection in the home communities of uncircumcised, rather than circumcised, men. Ignoring racial, ethnic, and sociocultural variables – the main factors dictating whether or not an African boy is circumcised in the

first place – they hypothesised that circumcision might serve to inhibit the transmission of the AIDS virus. Gollaher (1994) suggests that within a medical community that is desperately seeking some weapon against AIDS, its appeal has not really taken off, as even a physician who is a sober sceptic of the methodologies behind such studies concurs that AIDS – the nemesis of modern science and medicine – remains a mystery. However, in attempting to gain more understanding about this mystery, it is suggested we consider the two most important reasons for choosing the institution for circumcision: *safety* and the *institution* being recommended. This is closely linked to proximity and affordability. The statistics highlight that the safety factor is highly recommended for MMC rather than TMC, yet TMC remains regarded as highly esteemed and most practiced (ASFA, 2011:17).

Table 1: Prevalence of Male Circumcision by Country: Percentage of Men who are Circumcised, ranked highest to lowest

Rank	Country	%
1	Guam	100
2	Niue	100
3	Northern Mariana Islands	100
4	Afghanistan	>80
5	Algeria	>80
6	Angola	>80
7	Azerbaijan	>80
8	Bangladesh	>80
9	Bahrain	>80
10	Benin	>80
11	Brunei	>80
12	Burkina Faso	>80
13	Cameroon	>80
14	Chad	>80
15	Democratic Republic of the Congo	>80
16	Djibouti	>80
17	Egypt	>80
18	Equatorial Guinea	>80
19	Eritrea	>80
20	Ethiopia	>80
21	Gabon	>80
22	Gambia	>80
23	Ghana	>80
24	Guinea	>80
25	Guinea-Bissau	>80
26	Iran	>80
27	Iraq	>80
28	Israel	>80
29	Jordan	>80

30	Kenya	>80
31	Kuwait	>80
32	Kyrgyzstan	>80
33	Lebanon	>80
34	Liberia	>80
35	Libya	>80
36	Madagascar	>80
37	Malaysia	>80
38	Mali	>80
39	Mauritania	>80
40	Mauritius	>80
41	Morocco	>80
42	Niger	>80
43	Nigeria	>80
44	Oman	>80
45	Pakistan	>80
46	Philippines	>80
47	Republic of the Congo	>80
48	Saudi Arabia	>80
49	Senegal	>80
50	Sierra Leone	>80
51	Somalia	>80
52	South Korea	>80
53	Syria	>80
54	Tajikistan	>80
55	Togo	>80
56	Tunisia	>80
57	Turkey	>80
58	Turkmenistan	>80
59	United States	>80
60	Yemen	>80
61	Australia	58.7
62	Albania	20-80
63	Bosnia and Herzegovina	20-80
64	Central African Republic	20-80

65	Cote d'Ivoire	20-80
66	F.Y.R.O.M.	20-80
67	Kazakhstan	20-80
68	Lesotho	20-80
69	Montenegro	20-80
70	Mozambique	20-80
71	Slovenia	20-80
72	Serbia	20-80
73	South Africa	20-80
74	Sudan	20-80
75	Tanzania	20-80
76	Uganda	20-80
77	Canada	31.9
78	Andorra	<20
79	Argentina	<20
80	Austria	<20
81	Belarus	<20
82	Belgium	<20
83	Belize	<20
84	Bhutan	<20
85	Bolivia	<20
86	Botswana	<20
87	Bulgaria	<20
88	Burundi	<20
89	Cambodia	<20
90	Chile	<20
91	Costa Rica	<20
92	Croatia	<20
93	Cuba	<20
94	Cyprus	<20
95	Czech Republic	<20
96	Dominican Republic	<20
97	Ecuador	<20
98	El Salvador	<20
99	Estonia	<20

100	France	<20
101	Georgia	<20
102	Germany	<20
103	Guatemala	<20
104	Guyana	<20
105	Haiti	<20
106	Honduras	<20
107	Hungary	<20
108	Iceland	<20
109	India	<20
110	Ireland	<20
111	Italy	<20
112	Jamaica	<20
113	Laos	<20
114	Latvia	<20
115	Liechtenstein	<20
116	Lithuania	<20
117	Luxembourg	<20
118	Malawi	<20
119	Malta	<20
120	Myanmar	<20
121	Mexico	<20
122	Moldova	<20
123	Monaco	<20
124	Mongolia	<20
125	Namibia	<20
126	Nepal	<20
127	Netherlands	<20
128	New Zealand	<20
129	Nicaragua	<20
130	North Korea	<20
131	Norway	<20
132	Panama	<20
133	Papua New Guinea	<20
134	Paraguay	<20

135	Peru	<20
136	Poland	<20
137	Portugal	<20
138	Puerto Rico	<20
139	Romania	<20
140	Russia	<20
141	Rwanda	<20
142	San Marino	<20
143	Slovakia	<20
144	Sri Lanka	<20
145	Swaziland	<20
146	Sweden	<20
147	Switzerland	<20
148	Taiwan	<20
149	Trinidad and Tobago	<20
150	Ukraine	<20
151	Vatican	<20
152	Venezuela	<20
153	Vietnam	<20
154	Zambia	<20
155	Zimbabwe	<20
156	United Kingdom (Britain)	15.8
157	Thailand	13.3
158	Brazil	7.4
159	Colombia	6.9
160	Greece	<2
161	Spain	1.8
162	Denmark	1.6
163	China	<1
164	Finland	<1
165	Japan	<1

SOURCE: World Health Organization

INTERVENTION APPROACHES

In exploring all these present approaches as intervention strategies when considering the method of circumcision, it will be helpful to interrogate two approaches: firstly, dealing with the background of HIV and AIDS and medical male circumcision (MMC); and secondly, the background of cultural preservation when dealing with traditional male circumcision (TMC). In the context of HIV and AIDS, MMC is known to be the complete surgical removal of the prepuce. However, in the rites of passage signified through initiation ceremonies of various ethnic groups, including some Sotho groups in South Africa, a range of surgical procedures, from incisions in the prepuce to partial removal of the prepuce, are widely referred to as circumcision.



Figure 17: Medical male circumcision (MMC)

Source: http://www.malecircumcision.org/country_updates/documents/VMMC_2010_report_final.pdf

The term “medical circumcision” can take on either of two meanings

within the South African population, depending on the individual’s own interpretation:

- A complete removal of the prepuce regardless of the setting in which the procedure is conducted; or,
- A surgical procedure carried out within a medical facility even if such procedures do not result in the complete removal of the prepuce (ASFA, 2011:5-6).

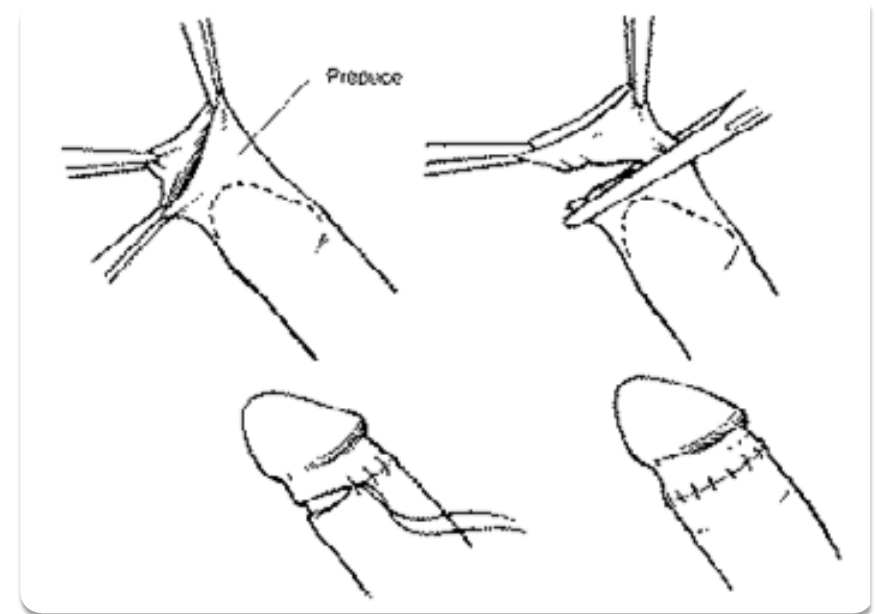


Figure 18: Surgical procedures

Source: ASFA (2011)

The context of cultural preservation emphasises traditional male circumcision (TMC) and it is important to take note of what other scholars in this field have suggested, especially when it comes to the manner in which people in general view this ritual. Scholars such as Ruth

Benedict (1939) argued that circumcision is a rite that marks the passage of individuals to adult status, which suggests that there is a need to know about such rites, and in different cultures to know what is considered and identified as acceptable adulthood. This is significant since there is sufficient evidence that bears fact to the reality that no culture is static, and that all are always in a state of flux, more so than ever when it comes to issues of identity formulation such as Traditional Male Circumcision. For instance, in Zambia some traditional surgeons have even started using anaesthesia; and in Kenya there is a growing trend of initiates performing both rituals – first undergoing MMC, and at a later stage following with initiation in the traditional rituals (ASFA, 2011:11; K'Aoko, 1986; Sarvestani, Bufumbo, Geiger, Sienko, 2012).



Figure 19: Traditional circumcision performed

TMC in South Africa has been under the spotlight in the media with devastating reports of high death rates of initiates in the Eastern

Cape and other parts of the country, raising concern from broader society. Others view such reports as the source of general societal “common understanding” to determine change or resistance to change (*Reproductive Health and HIV Research Unit, 2010:14*). It is argued that attempts to reduce the death rate has resulted in the establishment of a campaign dubbed “safe campaign”, costing about R4,5-million that drastically reduced the death rate to an average of four deaths out of every 20 procedures (*ibid, p19*).



Figure 20: Campaign for voluntary circumcision

The lack of relevant data also makes it difficult to determine the trends in TMC, as at present there is no related documentation of such activities. Though it is practiced by some members of the Nguni people such as the amaXhosa and abeSuthu, and with other racial groups such as the Muslim and Jewish communities for religious reasons, there are no records to this effect in South Africa (*ibid, p23*). However, operational costs for TMC vary from region to region, with an average cost of R132 per initiate in South Africa, and in Uganda it is estimated to cost anything from UGX5,000-40,000, or about USD2-16 (Sarvestani, Bufumbo, Geiger, Sienko, 2012; Peltzer, 2008).

The concepts of masculinity as well as femininity and gender roles and related responsibilities, are also required to be reviewed in relation to the cultural instruction taught in schools (*ASFA, 2011:16*). It is significant to critically scrutinise the rationale that has led young people to partake in this ritual, and whether this includes or not societal pressures which have created these ideas of what it is to be a man. There are also corresponding ideas and concepts of what it means to be a woman, tending to limit men and women into pre-defined roles with associated practices and social behaviours (*ASFA, 2011:16*).

The role of schools in inculcating a particular set of values to its pupils in accordance to that particular society is an ongoing and highly debatable process. This transmission of societal values happens through a defined education system that is a structured process through which each successive generation learns the accumulated knowledge of a society (*Shipman, 1975:3*). Shipman argues that the education process converts children into useful responsible adults in the world of related knowledge and social responsibilities. In other words, schools are agencies of socialisation functioning in accordance with the family, religion, the social services and local community (*ibid*). Although a school's curriculum attempts to incorporate and to transmit values which are in conflict with other pupils' cultural values, such conflicting interests are thwarted by the support that is provided by other agencies for socialisation. For example, in the contemporary industrial society, technical and social change creates a persistent conflict, not only within families with different values, but also between social groups (*Shipman, 1975:7; K'Aoko, 1986*). It is thus both the explicit curriculum and the hidden one that goes hand in hand with it that gets transmitted.

In 2007, the consultative forum between the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) reached consensus to support the preventative mechanisms in countries highly infected with HIV/AIDS through a Health Policy Initiative (USAID, 2009). This resulted in an estimated expenditure of US\$85-

million in 2012 with an expected increase to be about US\$20-million between 2015 and 2025 (*ibid, p4*). The Reproductive Health and HIV Research Unit (2010:6) estimates that the total cost of scaling-up MMC in order to achieve minimal coverage (52.5%) that is expected to reduce HIV persistence, is about R125,9-million from 2008 to 2020. In other words it will cost the government R9,6-million annually. Furthermore, MMC is mostly performed by private doctors and non-governmental agencies at a cost estimated between R600 to R1,700 per person.

It is worth noting that the debate of utilising circumcision as the means to curb HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa remains a highly contentious one. For example, Ncayiyana (2011) argues that the Weiss, Quigley and Hayes (2000) publication on a systematic scrutiny and meta-analysis of related investigations that reached consensus concerning the viability of circumcision towards the reduction of HIV infection in Africa are questionable. The reason being, meta-analyses tends to be more susceptible to manipulation due to the fact that investigations that result in producing statistics that are vital, have more chance of being declared than those that produce a negative outcome. In addition, though there was a publication by Cochraine on systematic examination by the South African Medical Research Council (MRC) that gave support to the correlation between male circumcision and HIV/AIDS prevention, this conclusion is not scientifically proven to support an intervention that promotes male circumcision as a strategy to curb HIV because "the observational studies are inherently limited by confounding issues which it is unlikely to be fully adjusted for" (Reproductive Health and HIV Research Unit, 2010:4).

Subsequently, in 2010 after the proclamation by the King of the Zulu nation to revive a traditional rite as the strategy to curb HIV and AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal in line with other Sub-Saharan governments, it is estimated that between 24,790 and 175,927 males have participated in medical circumcision programmes (*ASFA, 2011:7; SAPA, 2012; Sarvestani et al, 2012*). In addition, 35,989 were circumcised using the infamous

Tara Klamp⁹ (TK) and so far in KwaZulu-Natal there have been no reported deaths (*Shelembe, 2012*).



Figure 21: Tara Klamp (TK)
Source: *Shelembe (2012)*

When Shipman states that schools inculcate society values, first through communal acts, second through involvement of some ritual behaviour, and third through acts that are highly symbolic (1975:37). Normal procedures have been recognised as superior academic knowledge in comparison to other social groups, especially Western knowledge systems. For example, the recent launch of the circumcision campaign by the University of KwaZulu-Natal is a good illustration of

what this book is attempting to bring to light. This tends to become a leeway for identifying weaknesses and raises a concern such as cultural deprivation (*ibid, p117*).

The new policies that encourage the revival of indigenous knowledge systems, while being used to wean its practitioners and attack its practices, can be linked to a new range of policies. This has contributed to the recent development within sociology of education as it has been a concern with the way individuals understand their world through the use of knowledge that is available in social interaction.

In arguing further, Shipman (1975:118) notes that each individual carries their own version of the world, constructed in their minds as they exchange meanings with other people. This is why the school is viewed as the arena for the exchange of ideas...though it is one sided. According to Homology of indigenous knowledge systems (Homology-IKS) and phenomenology, a perspectives based on sociology of knowledge, there is an intimate relation between the social relations among people and their perceptions of those involved in the relations (*ibid*). The problem of social order and control is fundamental, and control of structured perceptions limit the freedom. This is why education can be liberating or oppressive – involving conflicts between the old version and new perception of a similar situation which can lead to conflict that results in rejection of the old (*ibid p119*).

Nkosi concurs, saying that *Ubuntu* is the basis of African spirituality within the theocratic settings (*Tafete, 2003:89*). Perhaps it is worth noting that, historically, indigenous communities in the continent form part of what is known as the communal system that operated under the auspices of the *Ubuntu* principle, which is guided by the *royal theocratic order* fundamentals and values (*Mthembu, 2007; Jack & Johnson, 1995:57; Magera, 1979:9-11 & 90; Rodney, 1973: 22*). Thus, the leadership style demonstrated by most communities tended to reflect to have a shifted from a customary form of ancient African leadership - a lion-like-type

⁹ The plastic device used to clamp over the foreskin of a man's penis for seven to 10 days until the foreskin falls off (*Shelembe, 2012*).

that maintains a gap between the ruler and the ruled¹⁰ to a replica that Chinweizu identified as the *jackal-like type* of leadership that lead within the group. For instance, in an ancient African village, elders and traditional leaders were responsible for community gatherings that were regarded as “village parliaments” and empowered to promulgate laws that governed that particular community. In ancient Pharaonic Kemet, leadership had a high respect of vision – *maat* – that declared and enforced God’s law. Neill (1965) argues that in the ancient era a king was also viewed as omnipotent, and the whole of African life was believed to be “God anointed” and his ideas and decisions were “infallible”. However, this shift on the root of authority granted the indigenes – in conjunction with their leaders – an opportunity to shape their destinies, to their detriment, by moving them away from and failure to keep the African principle of *Ubuntu* (which encompasses notions such as human centredness, collectivism, do good principle, truth and right) that guided them in pursuit of just-life (Banda, 2007).

When it comes to the curriculum offered in ancient African schools, it varied according to time and space of that particular African group – as indigenes spread in all directions which eventually impacted on their development. For instance, in ancient Kemet, indigenes scribed or embedded their stories through writings on the rocks while indigenes in the south of the continent wrote their stories in the form of art that almost resembled what is called *hieroglyphics* as it used signs and symbols of human, animal and the environment like those of Kemet (Yeboah, 2012).

¹⁰ Refer to Banda (2007).

CHAPTER 6



“In many African tribes this teaching took place in schools... boys were taught by selected teachers to fight in a disciplined manner, herd cattle, do a variety of crafts and to perform dances, songs, stories and religious rituals. The stress in this schooling is on moral education and social training rather than preparation for occupation...”

– Shipman, 1975:5

THE FORMATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE NGUNI NATION

In narrating the origins of the Nguni people, including the Zulu nation, one first has to acknowledge that it is wrapped up in the oral history of the Bantu¹¹ tribes of Southern Africa who migrated from the north of

¹¹ The term Bantu is derived from the Zulu collective noun for “people”.

the African continent (*Magama, 1998*). Various sources of information stress that the creation of the first human (*homo sapiens*) took place in the heart of Africa when it was called “Eden” – Genesis 2. Archaeologists and scientists have also confirmed that the oldest form of human life was discovered around the Olduvai Gorge.

History has revealed that people first moved from a point in North Africa towards northeast Africa, the “Middle East”, then to Asia and Europe. This era is also known to be highly influenced by church order or *theocratic order*, and was later accompanied by the hunter-gatherer economic system. That is why during this period civilisation was high in Kemet (Egypt) and no activity was taking place in the continent known today as Europe. The civilisation of Europe was brought forth about by Akebu-lan (Africa), “Mother of all Lands”. In addition, history of mankind reflects that the whole of Europe was first ruled by black African dynasties and later by Moors.



Figure 22: Map of first migration of homo sapiens/human beings
Source: *The Original African heritage study Bible* (1996)

According to legend they were a people who migrated from Kush/Cush to the Great Lakes region of sub-equatorial Central/East Africa (*Magama, 1998*). It is worth highlighting that ancient Egypt is referred to as Kemit, which was viewed as the sister city of Cush (which today is known as Ethiopia) and also referred to as the Two Lands. The Two Lands were pulling apart, though Ethiopians still sat upon the throne of Egypt and in ancient times were ruled by one priestly monarch.

Egyptian mythology teaches that in the golden age of the world, Ra himself – the king and father of the gods – ruled Egypt. This was the greatest age that Egypt had ever known and until the very end it was described as the age of perfection. In the ancient world, Judah/ Kush was regarded as the Light of the World; Home of Jah and mother of KMT (Egypt) that was considered as the Daughter, as it is known that a daughter cannot be older than the mother.

According to Eurocentric archaeologists – who are finally admitting what has been known for ages – East Africa is the location of the Heart of Africa, the Garden of Eden, the home of first Man, of Jah in Human Form, of the original Black Madonna and Child: the “Original Eve”, who is Mother of Human Kind. In addition, timeless Judah, Kush, Hindu Kushi (Ancient Kushitic City in India) was once known as the homeland of the Black Jah who walked Earth in human form (*Yada, 2010*).

Furthermore, priest-kings of ancient Judah-Kush/KMT established and maintained a mystical way of life, uplifted by the spiritual rituals and mystical ceremonies and the belief in Eternal Life and Resurrection – something which Europeans tried to copy and call Christianity with pagan rituals of praising the sun. This philosophy was born out of Europe’s attempt to understand the higher wisdom of ancient Africa. The concept of *two lands* (Kush and KMT/Ethiopia and Egypt/Mother and Daughter) embraced the mystery of what is referred to as *The Monophysite Doctrine*, which emphasises the belief that Jah can manifest in Flesh, or Jah-in-Flesh.

The earthly king and his royal council were once known to be a

reflection of the solar king and the great Council of the Gods. For instance, African divine rulers – such as the Rain Queens (Mudjadji) of Balozwi (popularly known as Balobedu) – were described as transformers of the clouds, and also known as the great magicians because they were believed to control, like the Solar God, the four quarters of the universe, time and climate (*Motshekga, 2007*). This narration confirms the fact that most South African kingdoms were modelled after the ancient Ethiopian states, as various literature shows that Africans in the north and south form part of one big family (*Mthembu, 2007*). This model either consisted of a confederation of states or kingdoms, or simply existed as one state or kingdom. This can be observed by the formation of the largest medieval confederation of states in Southern African – the empire of Bokhalaka (or Vukaranga) with its capital city of Maphungubwe and later Great Zimbabwe. The Mbire dynasty, from this point on, becomes known by the title bestowed upon the great king, Mwene Mutapa, or Monomotapa, which means “Great Conqueror”.

The empire was made up of several kingdoms which were headed by the emperor (Fura or Faro) while its kingdoms were headed by kings (Mambos). It stretched across the southern region of the African continent with established cities along the coast from east to west. For example, King Mutota of the Ngoni nation under the auspices of Monomotapa Empire (1425AD) founded urban centres such as Shumbamusha [today named Cape Town] and Mbiremusha [today referred to as Durban], which was later named eThekweni by King Shandu of the amaThuli (*Magema, 1998:170; Jackson, 2006*). Though much of the interior wilderness was left untamed, the coast of South Africa was later connected by a chain of Mutota’s administration centres. The following map attempts to illustrate the composition of the ancient community in the Southern Africa region.



Figure 23: Ancient map of Southern Africa¹² – Monomotapa
Source: *Origins of the map of Southern Africa*

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ZULU NATION

The emergence of the Zulu nation started at the beginning of the 17th century after a vicious abdication of monarchies such as amaHlubi, amaNgwane, abakwaMngomezulu, amaThonga, abaseNhangwini and other related nobles that were collectively known as the Ngoni – (meaning not a sinner) people. That heralded the emergence of other related nations such as amaXhosa and amaSwazi, etcetera in the southern region of the African continent. The majority of African inhabitants are Bantu because of similarities in the many languages they speak, as well as sharing similar cultural values.

Magema (1998) states that 10 tribes from Ethiopia left the north of Africa and went down to the south of the continent. The literature on early

¹² The ‘original’ names were change from the source of the Map in Figure 23 to be in line with the true settings of the socio-cultural values, natural environment and as well as their topographic settings - Mbiremusha was Durban and Shumbamusha was Cape Town

kingdoms of the indigenous people in Africa shows that kings and queens ruled it (*Magama, 1998; Callinicos, 1990:5*). The Nguni people, through their clans, which were based on male ancestry, formed the highest social family unit. Each clan was led by a monarchy that depended on him to hold his clan together. The group was believed to have migrated south from a legendary place in North Africa called eMbo (area referred to as Sudan of which was part of Ethiopia) (*Magama, 1998; Steward, 2013*).

The mixture of Negro and Hamitic peoples who migrated from further north in a series of migrations and later overran great areas, can be confirmed by many physical types (*Wrong, 1946:372*). Historical accounts reveal that a man named Nguni led the first migrants who were part of a larger group led by a King, called Dlamini, and it is said that the Nguni group migrated along the eastern part of Southern Africa in their southward move from Central Africa. They migrated southwards over many centuries, with large herds of Nguni cattle. They probably entered what is now South Africa around 2,000 years ago, coming in small groups, which was later followed by larger waves of migration around 1400AD (*ibid*).



Figure 24: Map of the Monomotapa Empire, pre civil war – imfecane
Source: Evolution of the map of Southern Africa

Some groups split off and settled along the way, while others kept advancing further south. Thus, the following settlement pattern formed: a dynasty of various monarchies that spread across the southern region (*Gay 2004*). This then preceded the birth of the mighty Zulu nation. The Nguni people settled down in their kingdoms, each in his own valley. One of these pioneers was a man named Malandela, who later begat two sons, the younger one given the name Zulu, meaning “heaven”. When he grew up, he set off with his mother and a handful of followers to seek a home of his own. Here he lived in peace and when he died, his people – the *abakwa* Zulu (a clan) – buried him and planted an euphorbia tree over his grave, as it was the custom.



Figure 25: A typical traditional Zulu house
Source: <http://www.onlinedebate.net/forums/showthread.php/21866-South-african-cultures-and-life-styles>

The name of this man might have vanished into the mists of time had it not been for his great-great-great grandson, Senzangakhona, who

presented the Zulus with a son named Shaka – the man who would turn the Zulu clan into a mighty warrior nation. His extraordinary military and strategic foresight at the time ensured that in the course of 12 short years, he had succeeded in building a powerful Zulu nation – to this day the largest ethnic group in South Africa. The rise of the Zulu nation led by the warrior King Shaka Zulu, is probably the most documented historical account of black African history alongside the civil war named *Mfecane/Difaqane*¹³. Magema (1998) adds that communities were displaced in their flight from larger warring tribes and as a result most of the monarchs were dethroned. Due to the *Mfecane/Difaqane* war, settlement patterns changed and with it the ethnic structures of the African population of the area. This led to the establishment of what is known today as the amaNdebele, amaSwazi, amaXhosa, abeSuthu and amaZulu nations within the past 1,000 to 2,000 years (Jorde *et al.* 1995), and was illustrated by Magema (1982:51) when he highlighted some of the incidents of the civil war and campaigns against one monarchy of the Ngwane’s when he stated:

“But Matiwane did not consent to be ruled by Shaka. And so was fought a great war, the Ngwane having been very powerful. The war lasted a long time, until Shaka introduced a new method hitherto unknown, the use of short spear for stabbing at close quarters, with only one spear for throwing at the enemy as it approached. And then Matiwane was defeated and became the wanderer in his flight. But in the end he returned to the Zulu country to seek the mercy of the king, saying, ‘The clod is weary, you of Senzangakhona; accept me’. And the request was pleasing to the king, and he accepted.”

¹³ The term **Mfecane** (Nguni language) means “destroyed in total war”. The Sotho speaking people on the highveld used the term Difaqane, which means “hammering” or “forced migration/removal”.



Figure 26: A portrait of King Shaka (the father of the Zulu nation)

Source: Izibongo zeNkosi eNkulu u Shaka kaSenzangakhona

Some of the praises dedicated to King Shaka taken from *Izibongo zeNkosi eNkulu u Shaka kaSenzangakhona kaJama, uZULU!!!*

*“UDlungwana kaNdaba!
UDlungwana woMbelebele,
Odlung’ emanxulumeni,
Kwaze kwas’ amanxulum’ esibikelana.
UNodumehlezi kaMenzi,
USishaka kasishayeki kanjengamanzi,
Ilemb’eleq’ amany’amalembé ngokukhalipha;
UShaka ngiyesab’ ukuthi nguShaka,*

UShaka kuyinkosi yasemaShobeni.
UNomakhwelo ingonyama;
UMahlom' ehlathini onjengohlanya,
Uhlany' olusemehlwen' amadoda.
UDabaz' ithafa ebeliya kuMfene;
UNomashovushovu kaSenzangakhona,
UGaqa libomvu nasekuphatheni.
UBholokoqa bazalukanisile,
Zalukaniswe uNoju noNgqengenyane,
EyakwaNtombazi neyakwaNandi;
Yayikhiph' eshoba libomvu,
Ikhishwa elimhlophe lakwaNandi.
Bambiz' eMthandeni beyisela,
Bathi 'Singesinelane neNtungwa lasenhla',
Kanti uzawudl' uPhakathwayo emphindelweni.
UVumavumane lukaphephe,
UDlungwana wavuma na?
Umvumeleni uGodolozu,
Ethi ngowanganeno kwaNandi,
Kant' ukude kwaNtombazana?
Ilanga eliphahl' elinye ngemisebe,
Kalokhu liphahl' eliseMthandeni.
Amazwi mabili engiwabongayo,
Ngibong' elikaMpandaba nelikaNdungenkomo,
Bethi "Ucu aluhlangan' entanyeni";
Akenibuze kwabaseZinkondeni,
Bath'uHilwayo bayakumhlaba kwaHlokoHloko,
Kwaf' amasi kwaf' uqephe.
Teku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabhi,
Betekula behlez'emlovini,
Beth' uShaka kakubusa kakuba nkosi,
Kant' unyakan' uShaka ezakunethezeka..."

The short circuiting of the above highlighted praises of the Zulu King Shaka is in line with the Zulu custom that emphasises that king praises cannot be finished.

So, the 19th century was marked by the rise of chiefs, the victorious King Shaka “who forced other kings to abdicate their power”. Kings who opted to abdicate were given the status of being chief/main representative for King Shaka’s newly forged Zulu Empire. Over an area of 12,000 square miles, the population came to define themselves as *Ama-Zulu*, including those who abdicated their clan kingship to second place. Moreover, the victorious kingdom had control over spoils of war such as people, land and to select chiefs/*indunas* who later became the aristocracy, enjoying more power and privileges (*Callinicos, 1990:5; Giddens, 1971:27; Gay, 2004*).

UNDERSTANDING OF ANCESTRAL WORSHIP WITHIN THE ZULU CULTURE

Traditional religion, which Zulu culture forms part of, is a term used to describe indigenous practices that are intertwined with African culture. It is noteworthy that African culture is grounded on communal cultural values, not an individualistic one like the Western concept of culture. According to this Zulu communal worldview, it is argued that an individual’s life is dependent and predetermined by one’s ancestors and extended families. Despite the fact that a person may have died, they still form a continuum from the spirit world to those left behind. Some of the beliefs that are associated with it – regular visits to the grave, communication through traditional healers such as *sangomas* or *inyanga*, and non-attendance of all family funerals – may incur the wrath of the deceased and the ancestors.

Some of the terminology related to ancestor worship includes: *Amadlozi* – the name that refers to those who have died and joined

the spiritual world, *abaphansi* (people underground), *abangasekho* (departed ones) or *abalele* (just sleeping) (Mthembu, 2006; Mthembu, 2009). There is also a belief that if bad luck persistently befalls one, then one has to do something to appease the ancestors who may be angry. The opposite also applies – good things are blessings from them too.

Even the bearing of children is the blessing from God and this is emphasised in *The Book of Life* by David in Psalm 127:3 and 5:

³ *Lo, children are heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*

⁴ *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.*

⁵ *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*



Figure 27: Zulu family in the homestead

Source: <http://www.umfulana.com/southafrica/country-people/regions/zulu-culture/325>

Mthembu (2006:18) argues that what needs to be remembered is that it was not everyone's duty to have children. For example, in ancient Zululand every man and woman had to pass certain stages before they had the right to bear children. The last stage is to get married, and this was emphasised by Msimang (1975) when he points out that:

"Ukuganana kungumphumela neziqhamo zothando oluhle nolubusisekileyo; abantwana bayizithelo ezingumvuzo. Singebe nalo igunya lokuthi umuzi wesiZulu ungumuzi uma kungekho bantwana phakathi kwamasango. Kuyacaca-ke ukuthi abantwana babaluleke kangakanani esizweni samaZulu kangangoba umakoti owayengabatholi abantwana usuke ebhekwe isambane ..."

However, Mthembu (2006) reflects that there are numerous good things that can be associated to marriage, of which the most important one is the begetting of children, as this is also confirmed in *The Book of Life* in Genesis 1:28, where God states that: *"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."*

Mthembu (2006) emphasised that Nyembezi (1975) argued that:

"Ukubaluleka ngokugana kunqonqoselwa kubantwana kusukela beqala ukubona izinto, kuthi uma kuzelwe umfana kuthiwe uyotholela unina umalokazana, uma kuyintombazane kuthiwe izinkomo zikayise. NgesiZulu kuthiwa ukuzal' ukuzelula amadolo, kuphindwe kuthiwe ukuzal' ukuzilungiselela noma ukuzal' ukwanda ngamazwani" (Mthembu, 2006).

In addition, Krige (1950) states that the significance of the birth of a child in marriage by citing that:

"The birth of a child is important, not only as the advent of the individual into society, but as marking a further stage in the lives of its parents. The first child is especially important, for no marriage is considered complete before a child has been born" (Mthembu, 2006).

The birth of children may vary. In the case of the birth of a girl, there

is great joy because it is believed that it will bring her father cattle. The joy celebrated in the birth of a male is because the provision of the future of the homestead is guaranteed, as he will be able to revive his father's homestead. This is illustrated by Nyembezi, (1975) when he highlights that:

"Banjalo nje okhokho babelwazisa uhlanga abayilo. Uma bezele izinsizwa eziningi babuye baqonde ukuthi uhlanga lokhula lube isizwe phakathi kwezizwe, wayekhalelwa ozele amantombazane odwa kuthiwe mhla efayo igama lakhe liyocisha emhlabeni."



Figure 28: Young men practicing stick fighting
Source: Zulu culture (2013)

Although a child is born by a particular family, the responsibility of guiding the child as to how he is expected to behave as he grows up is the duty of the entire village. This is emphasised by Msimang, (1975) when he states that:

"NgesiZulu kuthiwa libunjwa liseva, kuphinde kuthiwe umuthi ugotshwa usemanzi kubuye kuthiwe zibanjwa zisemaphuphu."

These proverbs indicate the significance of guiding a child in tender years, teaching him the good ways until he is a grown up, respected man in the community. Mthembu (2006) confirms this by quoting from *The Book of Life* in Proverbs 2:6 where King Solomon emphasised that:

"Khulisa umntwana ngendlela eyakuba ngeyakhe, kuyakuthi lapho esekhulile angasuki kuyo."

In arguing further, Mthembu (2006) highlights that there is a great responsibility needed from parents when bearing children, raising them through the various stages of life until adulthood. In arguing further, Mthembu (2006) argues that Krige (1950) highlighted that when a child passes through various social stages, this puts great emphasis on parents to have a critical eye in guiding them through these stages. He stressed this by highlighting that: *"Every individual passes through a number of well marked stages, none of which can be entered without preparation and ceremony, and which even birth and death form part of those steps"* (Mthembu, 2006).

Although the Zulu nation has this great belief in the guidance from *Unkulunkulu* – Most High – teaching the narratives about the cultural records of any African nation cannot be complete without highlighting the significance of ancestor worship in their daily life – especially with regards to protection from enemies and diseases. Mthembu (2006) highlighted Msimang (1975) who argues that:

"Umsebenzi wamadlozi wokwelusa abaphilayo emizini yabo. Balwa nezifo nezitha namalumbo. Bakhulisa abantwana balethe inhlanhla, inala nobuhle ekhaya. Impilo yonke yamaZulu iyinto yinye nokwazisa amadlozi."

However, due to the present Western way of modern life, children are born in hospitals, which impacts negatively on traditional midwifery issues, as this tends to deny the newly born regarding certain rituals, which can have a lifetime effect on the growth of a child (*Mthembu, 2006*). For example, it is argued that the delay in burning special incense to protect infants from evil spirits which can contribute to the child going astray, is one reason why today, we experience a high number of vulnerable children and poor individuals on our streets.

Mthembu (2006) further argues that all this has been exacerbated by the granting of certain rights to children thus contributing immensely to the destruction of particular indigenous cultural practices. For example, to name a few:

- Every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation.
- A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.

Today these and other issues have contributed negatively to society, especially when it comes to the separation of boys and girls, and young men and old men, as young men believe they have a licence to do everything that used to be done by the elders (*Mthembu, 2006*). For example, drinking together with peers –even at special occasions – was taboo in KwaZulu-Natal and in Bantu culture in general, as there were different age groups that facilitated the allocation of the same age group. This was done to avoid the youth from listening to the secrets of the elders (*ibid*).

Today's essence of children's education, which is directly at odds with Africanness, is reflected in the manner in which young people talk with their elders. For example, today's children call elderly people by their first names and also talk back to them – which was seen as a sign of disrespect. But, schools drum into learners that they should be assertive

to survive in the global village. Mthembu (2006:14) further argues that initial basic education starts at home, and all other education practices just add to what has been offered by parents. This is emphasised by Mthembu (2006), that various initiation schools have limited capacity, especially when it comes to offering "formal" education in accordance with the contemporary societal changes.

Then comes the period of initiation in initiation schools where communal values determined by the gender of the child have to be transmitted. It is argued that Circumcision is part of a rite of passage that can be performed either as a rite or a formal procedure (*Mthembu, 2006*). This highly gender-based procedure attempts to transmit values to the next generation, and depending on that particular community set-up, will exclude the other sex. For example, Mthembu (2006:18) highlighted that Montagu (1991) states that it depends on the particular community, as some communities perform this rite on newly-born babies or at any time while growing up or when an individual reaches a particular age.

RATIONALE FOR CIRCUMCISION PRACTICE WITHIN THE ZULU NATION

Male initiation among the Nguni people in the south eastern region of South Africa, as has been established here, is centuries old. The first thing to be noted about circumcision is that it represents a rite of passage, usually (but not always) performed as a ritual or ceremony (*Shipman, 1975:5*). In other communities it may be performed shortly after birth or at any time up to and including adult years. Male circumcision is customarily performed by men, while female circumcision is routinely performed by women among girls and is known as "*intonjane*" by Nguni people (*Momotj, 2002:43*).



Figure 30: Young girl during circumcision – intonjane
Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkCbv8wrlNg>

A survey of the evidence indicates that there can be little doubt that both practices were instituted by men. It is in exceptional and rare circumstances that the said procedure is ever performed by a woman. Normally it is carried out by members of the group who have themselves undergone the mutilation (Montagu, 1991). Thus, Ngaloshe (2000), Momoti (2002) and Nkosi (2005) argue that initiation is a major stage in the boys' lives, as it is seen as a milestone in their growth that is meant to equip them for the challenges of manhood. On the other hand it is a divide between those "who have" and "who have not" gone to the bush to do it.

Mayer argues that initiation is meant to change boys who are intrinsically wild, into responsible men (1971:14). Other view suggests that circumcision was the only exterior mark that has remained of a religious or sacred institution. (Ngaloshe, 2000:35) states the stages through which the boys have to go prior to the proclamation of their status as men, will be dealt with highlighting the characteristics of this ritual.

Rituals can be defined as formulaic patterns of symbolic actions for ordering or controlling relatively disorderly or uncontrollable situations, the hierarchical relationship between the levels of the structure within which the relations in question are defined (Gitywa, 1976:7). A said ritual normally indicates social/cultural perpetuation. It is argued that those who have undergone the ritual become committed to it and have an attentive state of mind, as these messages are transmitted beyond the generation that gave rise to them, thus, become oral traditions. Being a symbol, the rite receives its meaning only when related to the whole context in which it is elaborated. It evolves in accordance with the situation and culture (Moollan 1995:35; Ngaloshe, 2000:37). Circumcision is viewed as the only surgical procedure that is subscribed with multiple sacred meanings across many cultures. Though countless medical benefits have been attributed to circumcision, it is an operation that historically has had greater symbolic significance than medical value (Kaicher & Swan, 2010).

For Western scholars, the comfortably remote history of an African monarchy, long since rendered unthreatening by the historiographical violence of colonialism and capitalist transitional phases, has irresistible, unending romantic appeal. Culture or circumcision are perfect issues in which to digest this romantic past: the glories of Zulu history are much more easily imagined and assimilated by Western scholars in various field of studies from which actual Zulu people have been removed. Connections to the old Zulu monarchy remained a mystery (Brooks, 2000).

This rather outward exposure where the Zulu populace operated within an oral history-telling tradition, also view stories of past rituals and victories as important reminders of a glorious and now "unattainable" past. It is why circumcision discourse in this instance, does not constitute an entirely "invented tradition", manufactured for the benefit of scholars. This history is no doubt an overstatement of one made up of stories that have now attained the status of legends in

the region. Local Nguni people have played a formative role in shaping the narrative of the circumcision ritual, and its history is important because it celebrates, for them, the pre-conquest past and their lost independence (*Brooks, 2000*). Perhaps, to gain more understanding on the related background of circumcision, it will be vital to consider some basics of this ritual.

RATIONALE FOR THE INCEPTION OF CIRCUMCISION WITHIN THE ZULU NATION

It is well known that for the Zulu nation, King Shaka had stopped adherence to this ritual in place of better warrior lessons for young men. However, it is not clear for how long it had been practised before its demise. Different scholars in this field attempt to link some features of an “neolithic” culture that have been widely spread across the globe for over 15,000 years (*Mthembu, 2006*).

Early Western explorers argue that this rite has been practiced in the East, almost all over Africa, by some Muslim communities in India, people from south-east Asia, as well as Australian Aborigines. In ancient Africa it shows that various ancient Kemit/Egyptian sources dated 1300BCE reveal that they practiced this ritual for many years prior to this period. The age of circumcision varied according to the customs and values of each specific nation. For example, some nations performed it at birth; others on the eighth day after birth, and yet others during early adult life as the rite of passage (*Momot, 2005; Ngaloshe, 2000; Doyle, 2005*).

Circumcision has been associated with ethical reasons related to hygienic rationale, including protection against infectious diseases (*Gollaher, 1994*). Other views suggest that the cutting of a man’s genital led to bleeding and pain as a sign to remind man of the power of faith over him (*Dunsmur & Gordon, 1999*). Montagu (1991) and Mthembu

(2006) argues that excision and infibulations are referred to as Pharaonic circumcision, as it was practiced in ancient Egypt/Kemet. In addition, in Kemet it was associated with infibulations that were sometimes referred to as “the locking of the gate” – a method of male sexual abstinence. However, various nations utilised different methods towards sexual abstinence, for example in KwaZulu-Natal they used the “*ukuhlobonga*” approach for abstinence and other related methods (*Magama, 1998*).

Nevertheless, it’s worth noting again that circumcision in KwaZulu-Natal was complemented by other social activities towards nurturing young people and relevant to a particular gender of child. For example, when a child is born there are many rites that are invoked from the first day, at each stage of his growth until adulthood is reached. Mthembu (2006:18) states that some of these rites are meant to introduce him to ancestors and to anoint him as a full member of a particular family. In addition, this ritual is also performed to strengthen the child to become a respected and responsible member of a community, and as well as a brave warrior in defence of their community.

Customs performed at the birth of a child

The birth of child to a particular family brings with it much joy and emotion, and family elders have revived certain cultural practices for this occasion. It is worth emphasising cleanliness during the performance of cultural rituals. This was illustrated by Mthembu (2006) when he stated that culture refers to specific activities that can be described as habits performed to a child and relates to following normal ways of the nation, a well-defined and authentic manner of living that demands a strict observance, and failure to adherence could lead to misfortunes to the individual or relatives of the offender.

However, cleanliness is fundamental when performing one of the cultural rituals. For instance, a participant who has engaged in sexual

activity is regarded as unclean, especially when performing the ritual. Mthembu (2006) argues that Bryant (1949) emphasised that at the birth of the child the midwives would wash the baby with water from the pot smeared with cow dung (regarded as a high quality fragrance) from the kraal – which is viewed as a sacred dwelling place for ancestors.



Figure 31: Initiates in the kraal

There are also other oils that are used when some of these rituals are performed – initiates in other clans paint their bodies/face with red ochre. In other instances they use white ochre.



Figure 32: Stamps dedicated to the Eastern Cape initiates
Source: Kondile (2012)

Red ochre is viewed as the “way open” in feasts pertaining to ancestral worshipping, and creates a solid link between the living creatures and the past gone/the dead of the land of the living and other related family spirits (Mthembu, 2006:24). For example, in a feast where the red ochre was not used, it would be regarded as not fully received by the ancestors, meaning it was a waste of time (*ibid*). In addition, red ochre is a normal soil that is dedicated to ancestors who are seen to be protective under certain circumstances. This also includes women on the verge of giving birth to a child as she is between life and death, so is smeared with it. Mthembu (2006) argues that this is also confirmed in *The Book of Life* in Genesis 3:16, which states that God highlighted that He will cause pain in her pregnancy and give birth to children with pain.



Figure 33: The newly initiates – amakrwala – wearing red ochre
Source: Dlanga, 2013

Further, Mthembu (2006:25) highlights that Nyembezi and Nxumalo (1966) differed from other specialists in this field with regards to the significance of red ochre – *ibomvu/imbola* – arguing that it is used to prevent a child from becoming hairy like an animal, which is why it was only smeared on the face.

Besides the smearing of the red ochre, other clans burn special incense – *imphepho* – as well as have a never-ending fire to prevent an infant from encountering evil spirits (Ngaloshe, 2000). Barbara and Peters (1983) concur with this, highlighting that burning a never-ending fire is part of the traditional ritual related to childbirth, especially among the South Sotho and Bomvana who start a fire immediately on the birth of a child (Mthembu, 2006:25). Various medicinal herbs are administered to the infant, and sometimes Zulu babies can be given a medicine made

out of leopard whiskers, various animal skins, and lion's claws mixed with other medicinal ingredients.

Furthermore, the gender of the child determines the wrapping time frame. In the case of a daughter it only takes six days, and in a case of a son it takes a whole week, which is dictated by the falling of an umbilical cord (Mthembu, 2006:25). Besides that, there is a circumcision rite that most African nations/clans practice and believe in. In attempting to understand the inception and origins of this ritual, it is vital to note that it is contained in the Bible in Genesis 17:10-14, as it is stated that:

¹⁰ *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.*

¹¹ *And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*

¹² *And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.*

¹³ *He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.*

¹⁴ *And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.*

The ritual for circumcision is performed when the male's foreskin is removed for socio cultural reasons. It is done in the mountain and not at home, as boys spend several months away, depending on that particular clan. During this period initiates are taught various community values and on their return a feast is held in their celebration. This is also concurred by Mthembu (2006) when he highlighted that Peters and Barbara (1983) noted that:

"When the circumcision wounds begin to heal, a sacrifice called umdaga is performed by Thembu initiates. Each boy has to sacrifice a goat and eat the isiphika (twitching flesh in the shoulder region) and the

entire right shoulder. In Southern Nguni lodges, when the wounds have all but healed, a single beast is sacrificed. This marks the freedom of the youths to go out hunting, and also releases them from the taboos of drinking water, eating fresh food (maize), and smoking.”



Figure 34: A slaughtered goat in the kraal

In most African nations, including the Zulu nation, the failure of a man to partake in this ritual is normally viewed as a coward, not a genuine man, one who cannot eat together with circumcised men and who is labelled as a boy irrespective of his age (Momoti, 2005; Ngaloshe, 2000; Nkosi, 2005). Even women also ridiculed uncircumcised males, which was confirmed by Magema (1982:28), as he emphasised that:

“An uncircumcised person was not recognised as a man, he was addressed as ‘boy’ (umfana), however old he might be, and regarded as a worthless man and a coward who was afraid to face the spear at the stone (the circumcision site).”

Most people believe that this ritual was abolished by King Shaka who saw it as a stumbling block in advancing his unification of various monarchies through military campaigns (Mthembu, 2006:30). In addition, the length of time spent in the mountain and the related healing period was a major rationale for its abandonment, and was replaced with an alternative way of learning community values in the Kings’ Palace while warriors were in encampment. However, Mthembu (2006) argues that Krige (1950) contradicts the popular view of King Shaka being responsible for abandonment of this ritual. The reason being, this ritual started to disintegrate in Senzangakhona’s time, and King Shaka was just finishing what had already been begun by his father and fore-parents.

It’s worth highlighting that although this ritual was totally abolished in Zululand, some of the clans in the region continued to perform it, and it is argued that this had a positive contribution in the building of the African nation. In fact, King Shaka did not abolish it in totality, but rather introduced best alternative methods such as *ukuqhatha* which the boys performed during the cattle herding session. However, *ukuqhatha* differs from circumcision as it is quicker and no time is spent in the mountain. In addition, the educational lessons that were offered in the circumcision school were still offered when they became warriors (Mthembu, 2006:30; Mthembu, 2009). Mthembu (2006) argues that Khumalo (2005) highlights that circumcision and *ukuqhatha* differ, as *ukuqhatha* is about the cutting of a muscle frenulum beneath a man’s genital organ by utilising a thorn – *umsasane* – to make an opening for the insertion of a bull’s whisk string that is then tied in a knot.

Umkhosi Woselwa – First-Fruits Ceremony

Figure 35: A black bull to be slaughtered for a First-Fruits Ceremony
Source: Magwaza (2009)

It is significant to revisit the role of the bull in the performance of certain African customs like *ukuqhatha* by young men while herding cattle in the *veld*. This is one of the reasons that are used to justify the ownership of cattle and increasing the number of cattle in the man's kraal (Mthembu, 2006). In other words people give respect to the king and in the same spirit the cattle give respect to the bull. This is illustrated by Odoli (1999) who emphasised that:

"Bulls are a symbol of royalty and are associated with the monarchy" (Mthembu, 2009:123). In addition, there are other related customs that are performed by boys while herding cattle in the *veld* which include: *ukuklekla* and *ukuphehla* (*ibid*, p28-29). A growth process is a vital step in everyone's life, and this stage comes in different ways for boys and girls.

For instance, in boys there are known signs that show he is capable of impregnating a woman, while for the girls the tell-tale sign [breast buds] that she can get impregnated is an indication of adulthood.

Mthembu (2006) and Ngaloshe (2000:76) mention that normally when a boy is 16 years of age, he is already aware of it as he has been tutored during cow herding. This is also confirmed by Mthembu (2006) when he highlighted that in Zulu culture when a boy wakes up in the morning and leaves his parents homestead after experiencing a discharge, this is an indication he has reached puberty. This ritual is accompanied by other related activities such as the usage of natural medicine – barks, herbs, and aloe (Mthembu, 2006: 34).



Figure 36: Initiate after circumcision – healing stage

In addition, the shaving of the hair is a symbol of reaching another stage in life, as hair cannot be removed without a reason. This is stressed by Mthembu (2008) when he said:

“Izinwele zisho lukhulu kumuntu ongumZulu. UmZulu akumane asuke agunde kungenzeke sigameko. Kuyagundwa uma umndeni ushonelwe ukukhombisa ukuthi kukhona osusiwe emndenini...Nomfana ukhombisa ukuthi usehlukene nobungane usengena ebudodeni uyaphuca akhiphe izinwele zobungane.”



Figure 37: Initiate removes hair

This is followed by a series of events that pertain to the completion of the stage before entering the next level, and the expected behaviour in relation to *ukuhlobonga*¹⁴, the avoidance of penetrative sexual intercourse in society in general. This is emphasised by Mthembu (2006) when he highlighted that:

“He is often specially taught how to behave himself with girls. He is

warned that now he is capable of harming a girl by impregnation, so he should keep as far as possible from the sexual organ of a girl and confine himself in any intercourse to the thighs. Boys are sometimes threatened and told that if they make any girl pregnant they will either be killed or if sent to white people, will be imprisoned for a long time and cause all their father’s cattle to be confiscated.”

Mthembu (2006:39) argues that if young men follow these “rules”, they will be doing what is expected of them and become respected members of that particular community. However, the impact of Western “civilisation” has diminished the value of owning cattle, the once prestige symbol, to a monetary economic system that also exacerbated and diminished the significance of keeping livestock in Zulu culture. In illustrating this further, Mthembu (2006) noted that Msimang (1975) and Cope (1968) highlighted that:

“Namhlanje abanumzane bakithi sebehlonishwa ngokuba kwaziwe ukuthi banezimali ezilondolozwe emabhange, noma kumbe bafundisiwe, noma-ke banezitolo neminye imisebenzi enjalo. KwaZulu kusadliwa ngoludala kwakungekho konke lokhu. Umnumzane ubesatshwa, ekhulekelwa, yilowo kuphela obenesibaya esibonakalayo.”

All living creatures on earth need some form of nurturing in order to survive and that requires support from other people or creatures. This is the informing principle for the *Ubuntu* principle that emphasises that: *“umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu”*. This is also confirmed in the Bible in Psalm 23:1-4 and John 10:11, as these passages attempt to reveal the significance of a good shepherd to ensure safety of his sheep and also learning social survival values and strategies. The learning approach and acquiring of knowledge while looking after livestock, has been replaced by the formal education system.

14 Harmless sexual intercourse



Figure 38: Young men preparing to undergo a circumcision rite
Source: Wanzusi (2012)

Furthermore, this is illustrated by various levels that are followed by boys before they are able to attend initiation school. For instance, a boy cannot start by looking after cattle if he has never experienced earlier levels of herding such as chicken, sheep/goat, and calves. Only after herding at these levels does he eventually qualify to herd cattle (Ngaloshe, 2000; Momoti, 2002; Mthembu, 2006; Mthembu, 2009). Mthembu (2006:42) argues that each level has its own area of focus which has a vital role to play, and which is still relevant even today. If a young person misses out on one of these levels, it can normally lead to confusion at each level as he does not know where he comes from, or how to face challenges he will encounter in life. This scenario is also accentuated by Tyrell (1983) when he argues that:

“In Western society the young person faces an uncomfortable growing-up time. The passage from childhood to maturity often entails a

protracted series of encounters between older and younger generations, with the younger fighting for a recognition not easily accorded them by the older. By contrast, initiations in African society are easier on the different age groups, providing a clear set of rules dictating behaviour towards one another. The prospective initiate is removed from society to undergo experiences which separate him or her from society at large, as previously perceived. However, this procedure effectively binds the initiate into a specific social group and it is as a member of this group that he or she is not only welcomed back into society, but given an acceptable mode of self-expression and anticipation.”

A homestead then that does not have a male child can be easily identified, as specific male responsibilities lag behind – for example, sheep without a shepherd will be exposed to danger (Mthembu, 2006:303). In addition, Mthembu (2006:11) noted that Mkhize (2001) emphasised the significance of being a herdsman, when he highlighted that:

“Ukwelusa is more than just herding the cattle. There are so many things that you learn out there. It is a form of education and the hardship that you come across while you are out there in the veld prepares you and makes you strong, prepares you for manhood.”

Essentials of the Zulu culture

Zulu culture is closely linked to ancestral worship, as they slaughter a beast e.g. a goat to give thanks for whatever is happening in a person's life – such as protection, or seeking luck in achieving the desired objective, or by visiting a grave to request advice on a significant decision to be taken. According to the Zulu culture, they believe that the departed members of the family are closer to God, and their role is that of mediators who speak to Him on their behalf (Mthembu, 2008).

Fundamental beliefs and principles

For a clearer understanding of the functioning of the community dynamics of the Zulu nation, one should be aware that the people who passed away are regarded as *abalele* – asleep, or *abaphansi* – people underground, and *abangasekho* – departed ones (*Mthembu, 2006*). In addition, a human being is made up of a spirit/soul and physical body, which means that when a person dies there is a temporal physical separation as the soul never fades. However, the spirits of the ancestors – *amadlozi* – are viewed as part of the continuous relationship with the community (*ibid*).

Therefore, it is argued that ancestors – through the spirits of those passed away – act as the intermediaries between the Creator and people. Additionally, the Zulus traditional religion functioned on the basis that *amadlozi* guided their daily lives, and sacrifices were made to make peace with these spirits. It is believed that the ancestors liaise with the living through night dreams and use traditional healers such as *isangoma* as the viable form of communication with them (*ibid*).

The notion of ancestral worship is considered to be distant from the Western belief system. For example, in Africa, traditional religion refers to the indigenous practices within Africa that are bound together with African culture. In arguing further, African culture is part of the communal culture that does not emphasise on individualism like Western culture. In addition, a communal worldview argues that an individual's life is dependent and pre-arranged by ancestors and relatives of the individual's family (*Heidi, 2012*). This is also confirmed by African theologian Mbiti (1969) who argues that ancestors are not worshipped, but just honoured. The differing view in this regard is the highly contested classical protestant perspective that argues that ancestral worship opposes the First Commandment in the Bible – Deuteronomy 5:7 highlights that: “*You shall have no other gods before me.*”

African spirituality

The concept *Umvelinqangi* refers to a bigger, greater spiritual being, and *Nkulunkulu* means the Most High God, although these terms are used interchangeably and are central to Zulu spirituality. However, *uNkulunkulu* is perceived as a male spirit, controlling the heavens and thunder that marked his presence. The Queen Mother, *Nomkhubulwane*, however, is viewed as easily reachable and her neglect result in droughts, storms, barren soil and barren wombs.

Most people in Africa believe the following: There is one God who made the heavens and earth. He sits on the judgment seat and that every man will be judged according to their works. There is heaven – holy Mount Zion, where the righteous people abound, and hell where the wicked people will end, for their evil doings are regarded as sin. Thus, sinners will get burned up on judgment day and only righteous people can see God who is holy...as the wicked cannot stand in the presence of the Most High God.

Conversely, the Zulu people have a belief that there must be a mediator between the living people and God whom people praise and worship through ancestors. For example, in the case of a feast in the homestead, *isangoma* prepares for the feast by slaughtering a goat and calling ancestors to the feast. However, others argue that God is omnipresent and the whereabouts of ancestors remain unclear. Yet others suggest that they are parts without a clear purpose.

Spiritism

Let no one be found among you...who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. (Deuteronomy 18:10-11). God forbids spiritism. We are in rebellion against God when we practice

spiritism. King Saul consulted a medium, the woman at Endor. He had her call up the spirit of Samuel and his spirit said to Saul: *“Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Samuel’s spirit was not pleased to be disturbed and rebuked Saul and pronounced his imminent death, and the defeat of Israel’s army. (1 Samuel 28:15-19).*

Jesus says, *“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:16).* Therefore, Heidi (2012) argues that the ancestral custom is unbiblical.

Some misconceptions about God

Some African people – especially average people – view God as being “distant” and out of reach, and because of this, the ancestors become more relevant. The concept therefore of a black Jesus, who is not only viewed as a healer but also a redeemer/Messiah, is akin to the ancestors of the people, as he is not seen as the son of God and the only way to Father God. Jesus portrayed as a white is for a white man’s God.

The concept of the Holy Spirit in the African setting refers to a spiritual being. It is argued that the Holy Spirit lives in a world where spirits control the wellbeing of a living person and the community in general. Although it’s easy to form a concept of the spirit of God, there is also a belief that ancestral spirits lead people into God’s presence.

Biblical perspective on the misconceptions about God

Although the Bible’s account of the concept of God also refers to the history of the ancestors, it warns not to worship them as they are only for the guidance of the people. For example, the Most High God used living prophets such as Enoch/Isaiah in the Old Testament to transmit his messages. The Most High God used ordinary people such as Samuel to Eli

(refer to 1Samuel 3) and sometimes God used angels to pass messages on to His people.

The concept of Jesus Christ is viewed as the only way and there is no other mediator to Him. Thus, He is referred to as the mediator of the new covenant and those called by his name are bound to eternal inheritance (refer to Hebrews 9:15). He becomes the high priest in heaven and serves in the sanctuary and is the deliverer of better promises (Hebrews 8:1, 6; Hebrews 10:10,14). However, the concept of the Holy Spirit is viewed as the completeness of the Trinity that comforts and leads people into God’s presence (John 16:8,13,14).

Christ above culture

With reference to the Bible, it states that no culture has the authority to assume any cultural practice as above the work rendered by Jesus. A brief look at Jewish culture and the law pointed the way to Christ who superseded it, since faith has come, so there is no need for the supervision of the law (Galatians 3:24-25).

Further, Mbiti (1978:313) argues that:

“African religion...has been a valuable and indispensable lamp on the spiritual path. But,...it cannot be made a substitute for the eternal gospel which is like the sun that brilliantly illuminates the path... The gospel has come to fulfil and complete African religiosity.”

Therefore, irrespective of the significance or how well established a cultural method may be, if it is divergent to the gospel, it has to be changed. Thus, it is argued that the ancestral practice has in various ways led to syncretism and distortion on the views of the true reflection on Most High God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity, the church, the family, the significance and usage of scripture and the role of the priest. The origins of the circumcision rite in KwaZulu-Natal are linked to the narratives taken from the Bible where Jesus Christ is the significant

figure and also took part in this ritual. This is highlighted in the Bible in Luke 2:21 – when Jesus was eight days old, he was subjected to the circumcision rite.

Brief narrative on well-known origins of Jesus of Nazareth

The name “Jesus” is associated with Latin roots and was taken from the word “Iesous”, which in turn is a transliteration of the Hebrew “Yehoshua” or “Yoshua” (Joshua in English) meaning “Jehovah is Salvation” (*Yada, 2011*). In addition, the word Christ was taken from the Greek word “Christos” which is equivalent to the Hebrew word “Messias” meaning “the anointed one”. It stands to reason then, that Yoshua ben Yosef was Jesus Christ’s real name which can also be translated as “Joshua son of Joseph” following the habit that is practiced today where the person’s name is followed by his/her family name. So, Jesus conversed in the Aramaic language, a Semitic dialect of Hebrew. In addition, Yoshua ben Yosef also highlighted in his own words that: “THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE.”

It has been established that the archetypal Hebrews were literally black people, as evidenced archaeological findings suggest that the earliest inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia were members of the “Brown Race”, which is regarded as a Negroid branch of humanity. The Bible highlights that Elamites – the first Semitic group to be mentioned in Genesis 10:22 – were a black-skinned and woolly-haired people.

Furthermore, in the year 1872BC, Jacob (later called Israel) and his 12 sons who later migrated with their families from Canaan to Egypt, were also dark-skinned people. At the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, King Herod was campaigning against all newly-born sons in fear of the “King of the Jews” who was prophesied to be born around that era. However, Mary and Joseph, Jesus Christ’s parents, exiled to Egypt, living there until Jesus was 12 years old, until the death of King Herod. Subsequent to the

birth of Jesus, his parents were assisted by three black astronomers – popularly known as the “Three Wise Men from the East” – to escape from King Herod (*Yada, 2011*).

Jesus Christ portrayed as a white man

It’s vital to note that in the year 325AD, after the famous Council of Nicean gathering that took various resolutions, the members of the Council also adopted a creed that drastically changed the world of faith universally. One of the remarkable outcomes of this notorious Council is the commissioning of an Italian painter/sculptor, Michael Angelo, simply called Michelangelo, to paint “white” portraits of Jesus as it is known today.

Subsequently, Jesus was portrayed with a white skin, blonde hair and blue eyes – which is what everyone today seems to understand Jesus to look like. Moreover, to entrench this fallacy and as part of their continuation of racist propaganda, inheritors of this concoction, for instance in Brazil, erected a huge statue of a “white” Jesus overlooking the city of Rio de Janeiro. With all these portraits of a white Jesus around us, most people started to believe that it was almost natural and obvious to conclude that Jesus Christ was white, which is not true (*Yada, 2011*). Stressing these facts in no way supports the notion of a superior skin colour amongst human beings, as history has proven in various places in the world that such an argument is flawed, which was proven in South Africa’s notorious apartheid policy¹⁵ and in the tyrannous United States

¹⁵ After South Africa was colonised by the English and Dutch speaking tribes in the 16th century, these tribes enacted apartheid laws in 1948, to guarantee their prolonged control over and discriminate against the indigenes of the land - <http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/apartheid.hist.html> (Accessed: 16/02/2013).

of America, in the famous Jim Crow policy¹⁶ and more such failed state policies are bound to be seen in the near future, as the ancient Egypt remains a mystery today to that testimony.

The narrative about Jesus cannot be complete without highlighting the significance of the Nazirite vow. When it comes to a *Nazirite* which is parallel to Nazareth that refers to Yeshua's/Jesus' hometown, the word Nazarene is derived from the Hebrew word pronounced *naw-zeer*, meaning *separated*, or *denied*. Therefore, the Nazirite vow is the covenant that one binds himself to by being separated from worldly illusions – the will of mankind (democracy) that has captured the general population and consecrated him to do the will of the Almighty Jah – (theocracy). There are also other figures mentioned in the Bible that abide by the Nazirite vow, for example Samson is the first Nazirite specifically mentioned in *The Book of Life* though there are other general references to Nazirites much earlier...like in Moses' time.

The Nazirite vow involves separating oneself from three things: alcohol (including all products of the grape vine), uncut hair, and contact with the dead (no eating of flesh of whatever nature or praying to the dead). It is expected that individuals who have opted to abide with this vow in all those days of separation, be regarded as holy to The Lord (*Numbers 6:1-8*). Therefore, the righteousness comes from the Most High God and there is no difference in terms of the colour of the skin for one to fall short of the glory of God, as the evil doers will face the same judge on the last day (*Romans 3:22-24*).

Understanding the interpretation of heavenly signs and symbols

Since there is an accepted manner in African culture of understanding the present by communicating with the previous generation, the elders have to access related information or else face perishing in the face of the earth. Heavenly signs and symbols are vital to understand in this context, just as the earliest prophets like Abraham, who grew up in a polytheistic society, and his people sought their Creator in the nature around them, though at times they received no joy (*Ahmad, 2010*). This situation illustrates the extent to which society at that time (around 4,000 years ago) had limited challenges that contributed to their worshipping of celestial bodies such as the sun, moon and stars. Insight revealed that bodies set below the horizon could not exert their influence continually over man, whereas the Creator was and is omnipresent.

Biblical revelations state that Abraham showed his people the ineffectiveness of their ancient beliefs. He had been the recipient of direct revelation – and had been tirelessly searching to find his Creator through this process. According to the lineage of Abraham from whom the Jews trace their origins and served under the Egyptians for generations, even after the advent of Moses to free them from slavery, the Jews still reverted back to idols and images. Gradually, however, monotheism was re-instated through the strong line of prophets and kings.

Christianity emerged out of Judaism, therefore all of the early Jewish Christians (Jews who had accepted Jesus as their Messiah) were monotheistic, living in the midst of other civilisations such as the Romans, Greeks, Egyptians and Persians, all of whom had strong cultures of their own. At first Europeans tried to distance themselves from the ancient faith as it was declared by Yehoshua and later they accepted it. This was made possible by the invoking of the paganism rites that relates to the offering of human blood or soul sacrifice to their gods through the murdering by hanging of Yehoshua in the cross of which became the well known sign of western paganism rite, i.e. wood cult that is kept alive

¹⁶ The segregation policy that was directed to discriminate African people in the mid-20th century - <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Jim+Crow> (Accessed: 16/02/2013).

today through a Christmas tree rite and a cross. Without endeavouring too much on this subject as the scope of this discussion limit us to focus on circumcision, so I will proceed by highlighting that the said European political manoeuvres set a stage for a new religion of Christianity as it is known today that is founded on the distortion of the basis of the ancient faith and related artefacts.

In the same spirit, a belief in a High and a living God was already a widespread phenomenon in Africa. For instance, the Zulu people regard Creator as: *Unkulunkulu* – the Great One, or *Inkosi Yezulu*, the Chief of the Sky; Yoruba people: *Olorun*, King of the Sky, or *Olodumare*; Wimbun people: *Nyui*; Igbo people: *Chukwu*; Dogon people: *Amma*. The Zulus believe that in the beginning *Unkulunkulu* created people, male and female. This is emphasised in the Bible in Genesis 2:17. Although scripture tells us that the woman was created at the same time as the man, she was not formed until Genesis 2:22.

Moreover, God also created people of different colours and gave them their own dwelling places. Beliefs about God indicate that God is a transcendent and immanent being who controls the universe and is responsible for all things and all human affairs. In some instances, certain African people believe that God is an androgynous being. However, Kuiye of the Batammaliba argue that He has both male and female genitals and is called “The Son, Our Father and Our Mother”. Then in Zimbabwe, He is known as Mwari, the god of fertility, and is also androgynous in the divine hierarchy, with divinities and spirits ranked below Him.

He is also known by many names in Africa: He is known as Mulungu in East Africa, Leza in Central Africa, Nyambe in West Tropics, Nyame in Ghana, the Molder, Giver of Breath and Souls, God of Destiny, One Who Exists of Himself, Elects of Himself, Light of this World, God of Pity and Comfort, the Inexplicable, Ancient of Days, the One Who Bends Even Kings, the One You Meet Everywhere, and many more names (*Hexham, 1979*).

It is mentioned that ancestral spirits also play a role in interacting

with people and God. Thus people offer sacrifices and pour libations (such as beer) to the spirits to ward off difficulties and as an offering. In addition, community leaders consult ancestral spirits for guidance and may bless or punish people. Nevertheless, most African cultures believe in a Supreme Creator in one form or another, as a God, a Supreme God who created everything (*Hexham, 1979*).

There is also a different view that suggests that the Creator was thought to have once lived on earth, but left earth for His Kingdom in the sky/heaven because of human infractions. This is said to have led to minimal direct contact with the people, with the Lesser Gods being created directly from His power to do certain jobs that were given to them. These Lesser Gods are the Gods of the Earth, the Rains, Water, the Winds and Fire. In other words, it was taught that these deities are capable of answering human prayers by use of their own power and intervention, on behalf of man, with the Creator Himself (*Mthembu, 2006 and 2008*). Although the Supreme Creator is usually referred to by Him who has no form and is thought of in an abstract way, so He is available to any human being, irrespective of their position or colour of the skin or length of the hair or material wealth. In summary, a breath of His Divine Being is within all animate and inanimate things on earth (*Hexham, 1979*).

There are no known founders of the African faith, and this is confirmed by Mbiti (1969) when he argues that: “African religions have neither founders nor reformers”. Various studies have also shown that African religious beliefs and practices are set in the timeless ethnographic present. Furthermore, African religions have a history that African scholars have to explore, thus enabling African people to claim their place in the great faith traditions of mankind. Also, Zulu life and religion contain both belief in and worship of a god of the sky, a heavenly being, the Lord-of-the-Sky (*Hexham, 1979*). This is illustrated by Krige who says: *Unkulunkulu* (the ancient, of the ancients) is the Creator of First Cause. Thus, if a Zulu person is asked about the origin of man and the world,

he will respond by saying: “*Unkulunkulu made all things....In addition to Unkulunkulu the Zulus believe in a power which they call ‘Heaven’ or ‘The Lord of Heaven’...*”¹⁷ Smith (1950) and Hexham (1979) add that Zulu people refer to *Unkulunkulu* when talking about the Creator who made things below and great things which exist and come from the sky.¹⁸

Hexham (1979) argues strongly that the Zulu belief in the Lord of Heaven – whom they view as greater than the archetypal ancestor and whom is referred to in fear and as the Lord of Heaven – is similar to the Jews of Jesus’ ancient time, as even the Zulu people regard the name of God as being too sacred to mention (Mbiti.1969).

The arrival of missionaries

The arrival of missionaries not only led to social change, but a change in how the Creator was worshipped. Although missionaries impacted negatively on the worshipping of God, it is significant to highlight that their arrival just added more wickedness to the already dying heavenly culture in Africa (*Momoti, 2002:17*). This was illustrated by the ancients who highlighted that when missionaries arrived, though some people were still worshipping *Umvelinqangi*, they were also worshipping snakes like in ancient Egypt. This is still practiced today, as some families have respect for snakes, offering and using them for medicinal purposes, for example *inyanga* (*Mbiti, 1969*). The missionaries failed to grasp how the African faith functioned as they tended to confuse *Unkulunkulu* worshipping and the role of ancestors. Even today, when Zulu people speak of *Unkulunkulu*, they will refer to *Unkulunkulu* of their tribes¹⁹ after

¹⁷ Eileen Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1936), 280 and 282.

¹⁸ Edwin W. Smith (ed), *African Ideas of God* (London: House Press, 1950), 108.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

they first highlighted their tribal ancestors (*ibid*).

Missionaries were too ambitious in their so-called Western civilising programmes, as they viewed anything related to praising the Creator that was not similar to their ways as witchcraft, paganism and all sorts of other names. Despite various accounts in this regard, this shows that all men have some natural knowledge of God and ignore the fact that their arrival coincided with an era when *traditional knowledge* of a Supreme Being was rapidly passing into a state of forgetfulness.²⁰

Wars impacted on change, and the worship of false deities dismembered their minds and whitewashed their brains to the extent that they could not recall the true God. This was also illustrated in the way people took an oath, for instance, they would swear in the name of their king and their previous elders (*Gardner, 1838:17*). Gardner argues that there are two things that need to be noted about the swearing: firstly, swearing was the traditional way of making an agreement; and secondly, swearing was by one’s ancestor or the king.

Subsequently, the Zulu people had to be familiar with phrases which are acceptable to white people when referring to God. However, such phrases were already in existence, such as the belief to “the Lord of Heaven” that made a bridge between the two cultures: Western and African. This resulted in the adoption of foreign phrases, destruction of a traditional Zulu phrase, and adaptation to new phrases of Europeans. Therefore, Zulu belief systems and practices were altered by Europeans, forcing the Zulus to be subjected to European beliefs systems on their terms. This resulted in the development of new cultural traditions that enabled the spreading of Western paganism through Christianity and the creation of ‘common’ heritage (*Mthembu, 2006; Mthembu, 2009*).

These changes, which led to the abandonment of established cultural values and the conversion to Christianity, resulted in a division of the Zulu

²⁰ Alan Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country* (London: William Crofts, 1836), 178.

nation, as we are still exposed to identities that are normally referred to as *amaqaba* – unrepentant, and *amakholwa* – born again/repentant, to guarantee the colonising principle of divide and rule (Hexham, 1979). However, it's worth highlighting that the origins of all religions have a common source and: greediness and domination that led to a shift from the adherence to the idea of a single omnipotent deity, which remains contested as ancient Africa operated within the auspices of theocratic order while the present supports the will of man that worships celestial luminaries – sun, moon, stars and nature, for example, wood and the Christmas tree euphoria.

This has evolved to be a true reflection of the re-emergence of polytheistic traditions that have been revived from an erosion of monotheism. This is still witnessed today as some men observe eclipses, comets, meteorites and other phenomena as substitute deities. Some people before the time of Abraham had begun to worship the sun and stars as a great power. For instance, 21st June is regarded as the mark of the Summer Solstice that is celebrated by pagan festivities in some parts of the world. In addition, archaeology has revealed that many ancient structures were aligned to celestial bodies and worshipped stars, the sun and the moon, like Stonehenge in the UK, which is an ancient stone circle with a spiritual history, and the pyramids of Africa, Asia and America (Ahmad, 2010).

Though in ancient Egypt there was monotheism in the early dynasties of rulers, over time, sun worshipping superseded on a large scale when it comes to the significance of the religion of the Egyptians and the status of Pharaoh (Hexham, 1979; Ahmad, 2010). This is illustrated in some of the hieroglyphs, as they describe Pharaoh with the sun on his head, the great *Amon-Ra*. *Amon*, or *Amun* was considered as the Supreme Creator while *Ra* was the much older sun-god, so the two were combined as *Amon-Ra* (*ibid*).

Although there was colonial invasion, some traditional schools – such as initiation schools – escaped this as they were held in secluded places

where community values, expectations of the community, as well as the rites of passage to adulthood instilled African ethos irrespective of male or female – as both were subjected to the curriculum of community values and circumcision (Yeboah, 2012; Khumalo, 2007; Callinicos, 1990; Magema, 1998; Junod, 1962:94). Initiation schools' curriculum consisted of expected behaviour and circumcision which was highly linked to religio-cultural practices (Daneel, 1998:237). Furthermore, traditional schools played a significant role in the socialisation of the youth, enabling them to explore their conception of adulthood, what they conceived as adulthood, how their development is facilitated or hindered by structural conditions that are relevant, and a chance to explore challenges in life in general (Richter & Panday, 2006:3).

Due to the impact of the imposed western-Europe and eastern-Arabian civilisation(s) and colonisation(s) of various communities in Africa, they generally tended to respond differently to the upholding of ancient education systems. This resulted in the closure of traditional schools, such as initiation schools, in some communities. For example, the Zulu nation under the command of the warrior King Shaka opted to abandon the practice while other tribes such as the Sothos continued with the practice up until today (Mafeje, 1991:40; Marck, 1997:350). Khumalo (2007) adds that most of the traditional schools were held or conducted in natural settings such as rivers, mountains and forests.

Consequently, the present political dispensation utilises various social institutions that are seen as practical sources of stability and social change in modern urbanised communities. These are also central to not only understanding current problems such as HIV/AIDS, but also resolving such problems (Mthembu 2012). Perhaps, in this regard, it is vital to revisit what Bourquin said in 1959 on the status of Africa in relation to poverty: “*The poverty of urban Bantu; the discrepancy between his earning capacity and his cost of living; his ability to meet the demands of modern times in a city modelled on the Western way of life; his inability even to meet the barest necessity of life, to feed, clothe, educate and*

house himself and his family." (Magama, 1922:170; Jackson, 2006; Cato Manor).

Evans highlights that the overtly oppressive profile of the South African state potentially obscures a development that was geared for the expansion of administrative law in African affairs after 1948. Various strategies were adopted by the illegitimate settler colonialist regime in an attempt to entrench the segregation policy through marginalisation and manipulation of pre-industrial cultural institutions in order to set up a monopoly (La Hausse, 1984). It is important to understand what "culture" entails, especially when trying to gain more understanding of the basis of the South African Government's social development policies and some of the interventions – in particular those related to service delivery pre- and post 1994.

The term "culture" becomes more relevant when one attempts to gain a clearer understanding of African cultural practices, as it tends to provide a subjugated populace some form of advantage – such as the means of survival in their daily livelihoods (La Hausse, 1984). Just as La Hausse (1984) reiterates what Genovese noted – that the manner in which people cook their food and the kinds of food they cook reveal a good deal about their spirit – so does the state of affairs and the different cultures in this country today. La Hausse (1984) highlighted that Raymond Williams defined culture as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life. In arguing further, La Hausse (1984) highlighted that the extent of the definition of culture tends to provide a significant response to those who use the term, in particular when referring to issues that are viewed as fictitious, artistic products, and too broad for analytical purposes. Thus, the term "culture" is more useful when it is understood as the means whereby social groups deal with their living experiences and the surrounding social conditions of existence in order to produce an expression and representation of these conditions in a variety of attitudes, values, symbols and practices (La Hausse, 1984:36).

In any society, especially in the dominant classes which rule

colonised groups, they attempt to achieve what Gramsci defined as the "hegemony" which refers to the process whereby one concept of reality is diffused throughout society over all social classes (La Hausse, 1984). It also refers to the monopoly of the dominant class through their involvement in facilitation of "spontaneous" consent of the subjugated populace combined with measures that foster forms of consciousness which accept a position of subjugation. Hegemony also refers to the way in which the subjugated populace assimilates the dominant ideology as "common sense" (Manzo, 1991; Derrida, 1978).

In the contemporary capitalist society, there is also ambiguous correspondence between the diffusion of hegemony throughout society and the way in which the dominant culture is assimilated as "common sense" by the subjugated populace (*ibid*). Thus, the subjugated populace tends to view hegemony as highly complex internal structures which have to be continually reviewed, recreated and defended, instead of viewing it as the terrain from which to launch their cultural revolution (La Hausse, 1984; Manzo, 1991; Derrida, 1978; Edmons, 2003). Likewise, this also adds to the contradictions that emanate between popular conceptions of the world and the dominant culture that advocates the ideals borrowed from dominant class ideologies and those spontaneously generated through the experience of subjugated populace sharing their material conditions of survival in these popular conceptions. Thus, issues such as the ideas, symbols, practices and attitudes that express the oppressive material conditions are inclined to offer means whereby the subjugated populace deal with these conditions (La Hausse, 1984).

Culture as put forward by the anthropologist (White 1949:363) is:

"The name of a distinct order, or class, of phenomena, namely, those things and events that are dependent upon the exercise of a mental ability, peculiar to the human species, that we have termed 'symbolising'. To be more specific, culture consists of material objects – tools, utensils, ornaments, amulets, etc – acts, beliefs, and attitudes that function in contexts characterised by symbolising. It is an elaborate mechanism, an

organisation of exosomatic ways and means employed by a particular animal species, man, in the struggle for existence and survival."

White (1949) suggests that culture is akin to biological heredity as it is passed on from one generation to the next, as well as from one region to the next. Culture can be defined as social heredity. According to La Hausse (1984), this also raises a concern about the reliability of the notion such as the popular culture, especially when it comes to the total emancipation of the land-dispossessed African majority in Africa.

Thus this concept is characterised by submission that can also assume a potentially oppositional character that often instils the dependency syndrome on conscious leadership and organisation at a particular time (White 1949). In addition to this, the dominant groups have an indistinct stake in the philosophy of popular culture which they use as the basis of a critical focus of struggle between the dominant group and subjugated populace. This is emphasised by Johnson who states that:

"Working class culture is the form in which labour reproduced... reproduction....is always a contested transformation, working class culture is formed in the struggle between capital's demand for particular forms of labour power and the search for secure location within this relation of dependency" (La Hausse, 1984:36).

Perhaps the consideration of changing the educational curriculum in the current education system in schools should form part of the societal values (Marck, 1997:354). Since the ushering in of democratic rule which has appointed leadership that was educated in Christian missionary schools, the curricula have inculcated the Protestant ethics, which they seem to continue to uphold and reflect in their developmental intervention policies (Manzo, 1991:23). For instance, the Western oriented education scholars remain marketed as superior over the indigenous practitioners in their own field of specialisation (*ibid*). Despite the highly acclaimed circumcision rite that was viewed as a suitable HIV/AIDS antidote and developmental programmes that are associated with the revival of indigenous African cultural value systems, there continues

to be marginalisation of the related bearers and specialists – kings and *izinyanga* from respective communities of these rites and their related *umuthi* - medicine, remain treated as inferior in comparison with the Western oriented medical practices (Abejuela III, 2007:210; Muthwa, 1996:136 & 184; Francis, 2013; Zulu, 2006:36; Nesvag, 1999:9).

Furthermore, this is also illustrated by the observable "favouritism" of western oriented medical approach by various government social agencies, i.e. health department and related cultural social stakeholders in this country and other African continent in general of which is characterised by the continuous marginalisation of indigenous African medical approach, for example, the African traditional medical practitioners (TMPs) such as *Izinyanga* and their medicines remain categorised as "informal" and "hidden economy". This is illustrated by the fact that despite the capability of indigenous medical practice hosts a contingent of more than 100 000 practicing traditional healers – *Izinyanga* in the country (Sibisi, 1989:106; Hammersmith, 2007:5 & 7; Nesvag, 1999; Sapa, 2012).

So this suggests that this type of development practice tends to follow the same old pattern of subjugation or inferior status relegated to the indigenous knowledge system. For example, respondents repeated what is generally stated in various propaganda machineries, i.e. literature, social media, social events such as global sports, without interrogating what they are claiming to be fact, and remaining alienated from the true meanings of the ritual. As most of the literature revealed, this ritual was used as a commitment to the faith and nationhood and as well as the symbol of blood offering (Doyle, 2005). Despite the fact that Jesus emphasised that it does not matter if one is circumcised or not as it counts for nothing, what does matter most is to have faith – which means circumcision of the heart is what matters most – not circumcision done by hands of man, but circumcision of the heart (Galatians 5:6; Colossians 2:11) (WHO & UNAIDS, 2007:3).

Irrespective of prophecy about the circumcision rite from its adherent,

the liberalist in their modernist approach argue that a privileged individual has the ultimate site of sovereignty, but the state, the community, the class, creed, or people have also been summoned as the providers of such a site. In each instance, reasoning man is assimilated into a larger agency through a social contract between reasoning man and the state which itself becomes an invariable presence, an original voice, a foundational source of “truth” and meaning (White 1949:7).

Derrida (1978) termed the manifestation of modernist procedure as *logocentrism*. Manzo (1991) argues that this term illustrates the nature of hierarchy when encountering familiar and uncritically accepted dichotomies between west and east, north and south, modern and traditional, core and periphery, rational and emotional, and male and female. The distinguishing factors are the recollection of origins, for the basis of the source of truth and a meaning that is pure, innocent, natural and normal, and for a position and standard that is supposedly independent of interpretation and political practice. However, the term in such oppositional sphere, is envisaged as a higher reality, belonging to the realm of logos or pure and invariable presence that does not need any explanation (White, 1949). The term is also defined solely in relation to the first, the sovereign subject, as an inferior or derived type. Put simply, it is the demand for the east to become more like the west and the south to be like the north, the traditional to be like the modern.

Manzo (1991) suggests that it is significant to note that radically anti-ethnocentric discourse may reveal logocentrism rationale. Claude Levi-Strauss, for example, disputed the distinction between historical societies and societies without history – the culture/nature of which composed what is termed as “Native people” as a model of original and natural goodness, of pure innocence which was disturbed by the invasion of the west. Subsequently, the conception of logocentrism is significant for two reasons: firstly, it illustrates that the most radical, critical discourse can easily succumb to form and logic, and secondly, it concerns the implicit postulation of precisely what is being contended.

Thus, pervasiveness of logocentrism thinking in the field of development studies explains the rationale behind the subversive counter-discourse which is not considered seriously. It argues that any rejection of the logic of autonomy and growth as the developmental goal is viewed as privileging their opposition, dependency and stagnation and seen as “crazy” (White, 1949:9). Whilst the “post-modern” social theory suggests that modernity is the era with a clear beginning or end, and more of a paradigm or set of attitudes which form its origins that had to strive from within against attitudes of counter-modernity.

A pagan favourite pastime

The review of pagan-related rituals is paramount when attempting to understand the relevance of rituals and their significance. It is important to highlight that in the ancient world, the sun was the most preferred “god” and is globally known as the symbol of the pagans. In ancient Babylonia, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, they all had their sun gods. However, the native peoples of North and South America widely practiced sun worship, as did their Asian ancestors. The Europeans were, and still today, deeply involved in sun worship. Most of their festivals are dedicated to their sun god and were carried over when they converted to Christianity – the Easter bonfire and sunrise services, Sunday church service and the Christmas burning of the Yule log, as well as Christmas tree (Blank, 2000).

Furthermore, sun worship was also widely practiced by the people of the Middle East, and sometimes Israelites were trapped into worshipping it, which the Bible illustrates here:

Then he said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? You will see still greater abominations than these.” And he brought me into the inner court of the house of The Lord; and behold, at the door of the Temple of The Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men,

with their backs to the temple of The Lord, and their faces toward the east, worshipping the sun toward the east (Ezekiel 8:15-16).

Blank (2000) argues that although it is portrayed in religious art that the heads of the Saints were glowing, in a true sense they didn't really glow. In addition, the use of phrases such as the halo, or nimbus, are associated with the pagan Greeks and Romans as part of representing their sun god, Helios, who later members of this cult utilised it for Christian images and festivals (*ibid*).

The halo is the sun behind the person's head, although it's often not easily recognisable. So, at the beginning of Christianity a very deceitful way of mixing idolatrous sun worship with Christianity by charlatan converts became a tradition in Christian art (*ibid*).

CHAPTER 7



"We have to confront forces that create cities as alien environments that push urbanisation in directions alien to our individual or collective purpose. To confront these forces we have first to understand them..."

—Magubane, 2000:312

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To have a clear understanding of the contemporary social change in the "new" South Africa – especially in urban areas characterised by the elite class consolidation instead of redressing past unequal access to basic services such as education and other related issues – one needs to take stock of where we are from, what is said about it, and what it propels us to (*Edward, 1996:105*). Worden (2004) and Austin (2010) argue that in pre-colonial Africa identities were embedded in

the ways of life that were either destroyed or relegated to the status of uncivilised and backward beliefs (sometimes labelled as superstitious practices), or unacceptable challenges in favour of colonial programmes and preferences (*Abdi, 1999:150; Soudien, 2012:98*).

The present socio-political state in South Africa has attempted to incorporate the age-old notion of *Ubuntu* in facilitating accepted administration ethos as a strategy to bring about relevant service delivery to the former relegated population group (*Mangaliso, 2001*). *Ubuntu* is viewed as the citadel of truth and right principle by others who argue that it cannot succumb to current injustices through which indigenous value systems are still regarded as inferior or ridiculed – which has been recently happening (*ibid*).

A number of social theories can be investigated to set parameters for exploring this social change that is meant to “identify the unresolved tensions in the existing social reality, thereby causing a change of consciousness” (*Snyman, 1997:223*). This study aims to go beyond Asante’s (1987) Afrocentric approach limitation and exploration of the ancient Khushite approach sometimes dubbed as Ethiopianism, a holistic notion that encourages the promotion of a holistic approach – especially regarding the universal indigenous knowledge systems and its institutions – as a way of dealing with challenges such as intellectual imperialism, issues pertaining to general African development, land deprivation and political economy, particularly in times of decolonisation of Africa and the revival of indigenous knowledge systems in the globalised era (*Doniger, 1999*). This approach is used to see if it can help to deal with challenges facing this country or whether to follow a linear or circular thought approach of analytical pattern (*Welsing, 1991*). Such considerations can become more significant when considering the possibilities of recognition of relevant community knowledge systems in relation to natural resources such as land and human resources (*Goduka, 2000*).

Through a sense of solidarity that can be realised by the sharing

of institutions and a eradication in material inequalities, there has to be an understanding of an inclusive notion of national identity that entails an understanding for the destiny of others and an ability to identify with them. Concepts that define the present socio-political state in South Africa have to be unpacked for a clearer understanding of all the underlying implications thereof. The notion of a national identity versus a personal identity becomes central in understanding actions and utterances of different groups. Barry (2001) argues that the notion of national identity is relevant when considering the problem of ethnic divisions, discrimination and the notion of a rainbow nation. Furthermore, a recognised conception of nationality is insufficient to generate the level of “equal concern and respect” for other citizens with whom one does not identify in any other way (*Barry, 2001*).

Thus, national identity attempts to establish homogeneity, or a homogeneous national identity, which may not be the solution. Presently, one may argue, what is more visible is the cultural difference of material circumstances which are perpetuated by a liberal democracy (*Barry, 2001*). Although currently liberal democracy is the order of the day that depends on citizens having certain attitudes towards one another, more importantly is the fact that they must regard everyone’s interests equally, so that they are able to identify a common good and are prepared to make certain sacrifices for that common good (*Barry, 2001*).

Barry thus labels this exercise as civic nationality, which is different to formal nationality (as personified in a passport) and ethnic nationality which proves to be divisive, as it demonises “the other”. Identity is not a “constant sum game” that entails one identity to be replaced by another. Rather, identity has an “additive” quality to it, of which parallel is the ability to learn to speak more than one language (*Barry, 2001:81*). There must be a certain degree of overlap in people’s identities in order for them to be in a required level of “mutual recognition”, as well as understanding of one another to exist and obliterate differences (*Samara, 2004*).

Relating to the subject at hand, the contemporary set-up tends to

be more consumer oriented, but there is a need to consider issues such as genital mutilation in “times” of “human rights” – especially to those who are minors, as such decisions are normally taken by their guardians (Daneel, 1998:242). Despite the various views regarding the origins of this ritual, there is also a need to really consider its relevance at this period in time. In doing so, it will be vital to highlight that the origins of this ritual are somehow linked to some faith-oriented covenant that required that its adherents have to physically be circumcised as a symbol of their commitment.

It is the purpose of this discussion to interrogate why a ritual as this one has suddenly been revived and the related reasoning behind the process. This revival has led to ceaseless debates – some of which become relevant when considering the premise that the adherents of the Bible²¹ argue from – which cannot be taken lightly, especially when we speak of Africa and faith that remain inseparable. It is however evident that the liberalist agenda has become the influential factor concerning challenges confronting indigenous people and the manner of reduction of their expectation (Mthembu, 2011:13). Thus, Mayekiso (1996:24) emphasised that the tendency of the capitalist to ensure their “culture of privilege” in such as a way that they are:

“...willing to do anything in their power, even floating reactionary and untenable ideas to the civic movement, to maintain their wealth, assure the continuation of an extremely exploitative form of capitalism in South Africa, and lower the political will power of the civic movement to gain socio-economic objectives..”

²¹ Refer to some of the Bible chapters: Leviticus 26:40-42; Deuteronomy 10:12-16.

PROFILES OF AREAS UNDER STUDY

The areas this study focused on were from within eThekweni – Durban, Mkhumbane – Cato Manor and KwaMashu townships which are occupied by the same indigenous populace that has been forcefully shifted and moved around by the colonialist fronts in pursuit of their capitalist-oriented agenda. These indigenous Nguni people under discussion formed part of the exodus earlier in the century from the Great Lakes of Central and East Africa.

Nguni people in the south migrated from North Africa. Various family members carried their relevant possessions; women carried belongings on their heads and young men drove livestock carrying their sticks. Various clans occupied the whole of the southern region between the 14th and 17th centuries, naming it after King Mwene Mutapa, or Monomotapa or simply Matapa. Today it is only the east coast territory that is still referred to as Maputaland and Maputo (http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/maps-southern/southern.html).

Other clans within the Nguni people migrated further south, settling along the way. Some settled at Umkhumbane basin and founded towns such as Mbiremusha, which today is known as Durban, and Shumbamusha²², which later became Cape Town (Magama, 1998:110; Pheko, 1992:71). Worden (2004) argues that pre-colonial South African societies were marked by the division of labour, a highly patriarchal system of social organisation and authority, which connected together clans and shared a structure of homestead based on pastoral and arable production. Having land meant it was vital for them to have sufficient labour, which was supplied by family members who worked together to produce their basic needs (Callinicos, 1990; Austin, 2010).

Furthermore, in the pre-industrial society, social roles were based on

²² Monomotapa. [o] Available on: http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/africa/maps-southern/southern.html (accessed: 09/11/11).

age. The young were expected to care for the elderly, and the mediator had to reach a certain age to be considered a “wise man” who could be tasked with resolving conflict in the community. Callinicos (1990) and Worden (2004:7) state that family members possessed different skills, such as farming. Women were skilled in pottery and other homely things including nurturing children, while men were skilled in specialised duties such as being a healer/spiritual healer, musician, or iron-making/ironsmith. Young people played different roles in their families, especially when it came to food security and meeting daily livelihoods (*Callinicos, 1990:2; Magera, 1998*). Young men were involved with herding and milking cattle and related duties, and young women were responsible for doing chores.

Around the 1600s colonial violence programmes spearheaded by European settlers were experienced in the southern part of Africa and the continent in general, which altered the African subsistence community system. The land dispossession programme led to another bitter war for resistance against land dispossession/*alienation*. This was first experienced in the Cape between the indigenous people and the Dutch settlers which led to borders being “invented”. This war was followed by the British settlers, then the Zulu and British settlers, a series of other wars that followed, and continued until *today* (*Wrong, 1946; Callinicos, 1990*).

Colonial violence programmes varied from region to region. As colonisers were blood thirsty and hungry for looting the riches of Africa, they developed strategies of exerting power over the indigenous people. In ensuring their control, they used various strategies, for instance in occupied Azania [South Africa/Zuid Afrika] in the late 19th century, British and Dutch colonists participated in bartering. As time went on, traders began to demand money, and this marked the introduction of the *monetary system* that was vital for the colonisers as it helped them to put their values on goods for exchange purposes (*Wrong, 1946:376; Pheko, 1992*).

Another significant strategy colonisers depended on was their scandalous Roman-Dutch Law that helped them to “legitimise” their thuggery in the form of legislation that entrenched the values and cultures of Europe (*Pheko, 1992*). On the other hand, the policies adopted under this basis enabled the oppressors to alienate indigenous people from their land, decision-making, increased their control of the environment, and finally destroyed indigenous values and cultures. In about 1760 colonisers in the south (in what is now termed Cape Town) passed legislations such as the Pass Laws, and in 1809 that legislation was extended to all indigenous people of occupied Azania (*ibid*). Any resistance to these changes were dealt with by killing, marring and imprisonment to the famous Robben Island that first experienced the imprisonment of “all” indigenous royal families. The indigenes were further subjected to their movement control and chosen residential areas through forced personal details in the form of pass documents (that was something new to the indigenes) (*Callinicos, 1990*).

According to Abdi (1999), these strategies played a significant role as they helped in the formation of perceptions and practices that entrenched the uneven compartments among the racial groups, and as well as the identity construction. Ghosh (1996) argues that “identities” are always in the making and are the result of an individual’s history and culture, class and ethnicity or race, as well as their experiences as male and female (*Abdi, 1999:153*). Thus, pre-colonial African individuals who had a clear identity and who were affected by the rise of colonialism, were humiliated, oppressed, and “technically” seconded from a host of earlier and recent racial theories, and left their off-spring with an identity crisis which still exists today. The newly imposed identities proved false, forced on them while they emphasised the superiority of the colonial status (*Soudien, 2012; Abdi, 1999*).

The full scale war against the physical and mental being of the African population was also taken to absurdity levels when those who arrived from Europe invoked what they defiantly called the principle of first

occupancy – dubbed primitive accumulation²³ (*Pheko, 1992*). Therefore, further entrenchment of colonialism through the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 allowed Western colonies self-governance from direct Imperial control, which allowed local whites to run the “newly” founded national state. Soon after swift changes towards greater regulation of the African presence in the cities was experienced. For example, the 1911 Native Regulation Act was promulgated that substantially consolidated a system in which single proletarianised²⁴ male individuals were expected to live in hostels for the duration of their labour contracts, before returning to their newly demarcated labour reserves. In addition, ongoing attempts to install an effective system of pass controls over African women had shortcomings. As about a quarter of Durban’s 30,000 African workers were formally housed in male only barracks, white paranoia about Africans living outside of prison-like compounds remained rampant, which demanded new strategies to meet this challenge (*ibid*).

The passing of the 1913 Land Act granted legal impetus to broad daylight land robbery, as massive enclosures of land for the purpose of setting up white commercial agriculture that exacerbated a rural crisis into a spiralling descent of mass poverty that is still witnessed in the deprivation and socio-economic struggles of today. The Land Act started two waves of evictions from the land: the land expropriation and enclosure.

These changes impacted negatively on the indigenes, as in the 1920s fundamental changes in the Zulu nation were evident when large scores of men descended on the mines and cities as wage earners. These changes formed part of the bigger scheme of proletarianisation that

included the importation of indenture labour. This sparked not only a culture of separation from the land and the introduction of an urbanised lifestyle, but an influx of Zulu people into Durban.

The new city demarcation of eThekweni²⁵ Municipality was decided after local government elections in 2000 and the implementation of the Municipal Structures Act. Through this, seven different local councils that were previously divided under apartheid demarcations were unified. Thus, the eThekweni Municipality covers uMkhomazi in the south, including the tribal areas of Mbumbulu, Uthongathi in the north, some tribal areas in Ndwedwe, and Cato Ridge in the west. The eThekweni Municipality Metropolitan area has a geographical area of 2,297 square kilometres. Most of the newly incorporated areas are rural in nature with 50 percent of the area being used for subsistence farming and only two percent for urban settlement. See Map of eThekweni Municipality area (*Mthembu, 2008*).

²³ Primitive accumulation - a strategy that Western colonisers utilised to deprive indigenes of Africa their land of which the colonisers distributed amongst themselves as rewards for their loyal individuals to the colonising programme.

²⁴ Forced to sell his/her labour power to meet daily livelihoods.

²⁵ This town was named Mbiremusha during the reign of King Mutota of the Ngoni nation under the auspices of the Monomotapa Empire (1425AD), but the name eThekweni was first mentioned by King Shandu of the amaThuli, who settled on the bay and later named the bay after its appearance – like a bull with one testicle – *ithweke* (the Bluff being the penis and the Bay being the testicle) that refers to a lagoon (*Magema, 1998:170*).



Figure 39: A map of eThekweni Municipality area

Source: eThekweni Integrated Development Plan 2002-2006

The land dispossession of the indigenes left those who were occupants of Mbiremusha landless while the Indian that was introduced to initiate a proletarianisation processes indentured labourers were granted plots of land. The indigenes had to rent in their own backyard, leasing small plots in uMkhumbane (Cato Manor) from Indian settlers, as they were prohibited by the law from purchasing land of their own. By 1932, uMkhumbane was incorporated into the borough of Durban with its hundreds of informal shelters.

However, the era of apartheid in the 1940s marked a further degeneration to the livelihoods for all black South Africans – in particular Africans and the Zulu communities living in Durban. These changes

included the separation of citizens into so-called “white”, “Bantu/African”, “Coloured” and “Indian” suburbs as a result of the Group Areas Act of 1950. Townships were established to accommodate the mass resettlement of Africans who were initially removed from Durban and sent to uMkhumbane during 1958-65. Some were further relocated to KwaMashu²⁶ township that was built by the City of Durban between 1957 and 1968. More resistance and rioting occurred as a result of the forced removals, especially in uMkhumbane. In 1988 KwaMashu township was incorporated into the KwaZulu-Natal homeland labour reserve. This incorporation contributed to the high levels of political mobilisation that was witnessed in the 1980s, and as well as its notoriety for criminal and gang activity in the late 1980s and 1990s which led to political settlement in 1994 (Rauch, 2002).

In post-apartheid times, KwaMashu Township is known for its high youth unemployment rate which has contributed to the soaring crime rate in the area. They have, however, been receptive to government interventions that are meant to revive cultural rites – like circumcision – with a view to exploring and understanding themselves better, especially as urban youth is totally alienated from the land and their surrounding environment.

Since South Africa is considered a country that has “repented” in its segregational policies that were marked by high levels of inequality in accessing basic services and unfair land distribution and as well as the continuance of forced selling of their labour power for their daily livelihoods, it remains a question why this inclusive city theory lets the loot from the colonisation process remain safeguarded by vicious Roman-Dutch Law. The scrutiny of provision has become more apparent with a view to understanding physical welfare, service infrastructure

²⁶ KwaMashu simply means *Place of Marshall* named after Marshall Campbell who once owned the land as his sugar cane farm after the indigenous populace were forcefully removed from it, which formed part of the notorious land grab by the colonisers who dubbed it primitive accumulation (Rauch, 2002).

and the quality of life, health, safety and security of residents, as well as the “ability to aspire” through the cycle of generations. The inclusion view is regarded as the cornerstone of current economic and sustainable development that has led to the merger of various administration centres that were divided along racial lines in the colonial regime which emphasised the segregated development policy. Then, the notion of inclusion becomes more critical, especially when government engages its citizens to participate in decision-making and planning, which provides a sense of control over social and political aspects of living that encourage well-being and belonging, and being part of the economic life of the city and society in general (*Inclusive Cities, 2006*).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research approach was utilised in this study, as it assisted in collecting data and gaining a understanding of the phenomenon in its natural locale and participant’s perspectives on the issue under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:2; Morse, 1994).

A wide range of secondary literature, for example, government documents, journals, manuals, reports and magazines were also drawn on and utilised in the study.

Lastly, various tools were utilised to collect information: interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule, questionnaire with semi –structured questions were administered to participants, unstructured questions were used in the focus group interviews, direct observation, case study, visuals in order to gain a better understanding of the issue that is being studied (*Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:133; Denzin, 1970; Tellis, 1997; Eisenhardt, 2002:9; Kuechler, 1998:178*).

SAMPLING METHODS

The non-probability stratified random sampling methods were used to identify participants and critical incidents that are relevant to the topic under study (*Morse, 1994a:228; Goddard & Melville, 2005:37*).

Although circumcision is permitted to young men between 15 and 49 years, for the sake of this study the focus was on young men between the ages of 18 and 45 years (*Department of Health – KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, 2010a*). Participants were drawn from among black African youth from within designated areas regarded as having a high incidence of HIV/AIDS – those that are regarded as the top four that include the eThekweni Municipality (*Department of Health – KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, 2010b; Department of Health, South Africa, 2010*). Participants were drawn from the unemployed and employed members of the community.

DATA ANALYSIS

Primary analysis began immediately when the data collection commenced helped in identification of significant points, contradictions, inconsistencies, emerging common themes and related literature and as well as comparing and contrast of data (*Thorne, 2000*). Comparative analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) was also utilised helped in comparing different urban settings, development of the understanding of the micro-formal and micro-substantive notions and as well as checking data reliability, testing ideas, identification of distinct features of the category and establishment of generalities within the group.

Random sample selection enabled the easy selection of the available participants during the time of research. Interviews were audiotape and transcribed. In-depth interviews were conducted until it was determined that no new emerging themes from the analyses. The data collected in

this study was analysed with the SPSS software using a thematic analysis approach known as a template analysis (Andrew, Nonnecke & Preece, 2003:196).

Participant's comments were always used during the interviews to ensure the guaranteeing of the accuracy and the understanding of their perspectives on issues such as the experience, feelings and challenges encountered in relation to the information that was collected.

The study was approved for the protection of human subjects by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, *Research Ethics committee* and informed, written consent was granted. Participants were offered options to participate in the study and guarantee of confidentiality and consent form was filled/ read to them prior to the commencement of the study.

CHAPTER 8



"The ideologies...show how the people tried to cope intellectually and morally with experience of military and economic vulnerability."

- Mayer, 1980:1

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study revealed that circumcision has been reawakened as one of the strategies in redressing past injustices as well as reviving the culture. This revival is also seen as a pertinent strategy to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS. As the study progressed, however, it became apparent that the practitioners of this ritual are never afforded their rightful role as they are not seen as professionals in their own area of special interest – more so in urban areas. Findings tends to confirm what has been argued by Manzo (1991:23) that the socialisation agencies that are currently

available in our society, the level of alienation is very high, rearing its ugly head of the past colonialist agenda which is characterised by traits of demeaning indigenous cultural value systems (Manzo, 1991:23).

The Western-oriented education system remains projected as superior over the indigenous practitioners in their own field of specialisation (Shipman, 1975; Guy, 2004). This was further evidenced in the findings of a study titled: *The scrutiny on revival of practices in the post-apartheid South Africa: a case of perceptions of young men based in Durban, Jozini and Hluhluwe communities in KwaZulu-Natal* (Mthembu, 2012). This can be witnessed by clinic/hospital intervention that is applied in urban areas, as only Western trained medical doctors conduct this type of service despite this process is being publicly proclaimed as the revival of indigenous culture.

Therefore, this tends to reveal the level of alienation of indigenes from their cultural practices which play a great part in offering a form of misinformation towards the socialisation of young people as outlined above, and also suggests a form of continuance of the same old colonialist agenda that undermined and demeaned indigenous knowledge systems. This scenario seems to confirm what was illustrated by Manzo (1991:14), when she emphasised that:

"To the extent adulthood itself is valued as a symbol of completeness and as an end-product of growth or development, childhood is seen as an imperfect state on the way to adulthood, normally, full socialisation and humanness. This is the theory of progress as applied to the individual life-cycle. The result is the frequent use of childhood is a design of cultural and political immaturity or, it comes to the same thing, inferiority. Much of the pull of the ideology of colonisation and much of the power of the idea of modernity can be traced to the evolutionary implications of the concept of the child in the Western worldview".

When informants were asked about their understanding of the circumcision ritual, they tended to cite what is usually promoted by electronic media (television and radio):

"I have only heard from the radio that circumcision is a procedure that is done to prevent diseases."

"I have only heard from the radio that if you are circumcised you cannot easily get infected by sexual diseases."

"I always hear people talking about it but I do not know much about it."

"I can't really say much about circumcision because I'm a Zulu, and circumcision is a Xhosa culture."

"Circumcision is the cutting of the foreskin."

"Circumcision reduces disease infection by 50 percent and improves enjoyment of sexual intercourse."

When it comes to their preference between the ancient and contemporary methods of conducting this ritual, they highlighted the following:

"I would choose the present practice because there are trained professionals at the circumcision clinic who know what they are doing."

"I would choose the current method because it is safe, there are trained personnel, and it is scientifically checked by doctors who know the dangers of cutting a person's private parts. It is done in the hospital so you get home soon, it is not scary and one gets care from the hospital. It also does not pose any threat to personal health."

"I would choose the ancient method because it is better and teaches us about taking care of yourself."

"Culturally I don't like the present method but for the sake of diseases I accept it."

"I would choose the ancient circumcision practice rather than the present method."

When respondents were questioned about the rationale for circumcision, they highlighted the following:

"I got circumcised because I want protection against infectious diseases."

"I got circumcised because I wanted to know what circumcision is

all about.”

“I got circumcised because my foreskin was collecting dirt.”

“I went for circumcision because I want to take care of myself.”

“Circumcision helps to reduce the chance of getting infectious diseases, helps your sexual partner to enjoy sexual intercourse, and enlarges one’s sexual organ.”

“If you maintain the ancient ways – especially when it comes to ukusoma – it ensures your safety.”

When informants were asked about their knowledge regarding the historical background of the circumcision ritual in KwaZulu-Natal, they highlighted the following:

“I grew up knowing about the bull’s flywhisk strand that is tied for two to three days, depending on the individual.”

“I have minimal knowledge about circumcision because the community I come from does not practice and is not familiar with this ritual.”

“It was done before and Shaka stopped it because it was affecting his army. Other cultures continued with it.”

“I heard that it helps in protection against sexually transmitted diseases, though one notes that we Zulu people have always ignored such practices because it was never part of our culture.”

“I knew that circumcision was a culture that was only performed by the Xhosa people.”

The above data reveals that informants have different views when it comes to understanding the circumcision ritual. However, their responses tend to reflect the significant role that is played by socialisation agents such as the family and modern technology – media gives a particular understanding of certain issues at a specific time in society. For example, urban youth tended to depend on the media to learn about traditional rites that were previously seen as taboo – it is not normal practice to talk about the circumcision rite in public.

Data shows that although initiation rites have been practiced for thousands of years by almost all different global communities including

Africa, its continuation has tended to vary from region to region according to that particular community. Data also reveals mixed responses to sustenance and revival of such a practice that has been exacerbated by different issues such as cultural transition, wars and colonialism. It further indicates some uniform approach to the revival of circumcision globally, as all countries that have officially declared their cultural revival status have been influenced by financial support and related aid from other countries.

It is clear then that the South African Government’s decision might have been influenced by foreign financial aid for circumcision rite clinical operations. In this regard, data reveals that there are two observable intervention circumcision methods currently being practiced in KwaZulu-Natal. The first method is practiced in the homestead of the Zulu monarchy that focuses on the youth from rural and surrounding areas. This suggests that by virtue of the origin of the family background in the rural area, the youth will have been exposed to family household chores such as cattle herding which enabled them to partake in other related initiatives of young men such as *ukuqhatha*. In addition, the revival of circumcision in rural areas has managed to bring forward some of the ancient socialisation strategies for young people by the elders, as they were responsible for encouraging a desired behaviour and attitude in the community. However, data shows that the present revived circumcision practice in rural areas tends to include some Western intervention methods in this regard, for instance the involvement of Western trained medical professionals to conduct this rite.

The second intervention approach tends to focus on young men from urban areas such as cities or town centres, townships and informal settlement areas. This suggests that by virtue of the urban reality, residential limitations have denied young urban males a chance of

exposure to indigenous socialisation processes such as *ukwelusa*²⁷. This scenario suggests that young urban men lack a related activity where they get exposed to young people's activities such as *ukuqhatha* and the like (*Mthembu, 2009*). In addition, data reveals that some urban males responded to the announcement made by government calling for young men to partake in circumcision, not only as a way of curbing the scourge of HIV/AIDS within the black community, but also as a way of exploring and gaining a better understanding of this rite of passage as there are no related activities in urban areas.

Furthermore, data reveals that urban circumcision intervention tends to focus more on the number of circumcised youth than anything else, which suggests that the intervention has a limited focus when encouraging "desired" and expected community behaviours, values and related attitudes towards nurturing young people. It also suggests that the present intervention tends to work towards one expected outcome, as its practitioners are mostly trained medical professionals from the alien education system that imposes a particular set of values which are not in line with expected African value systems. Western-oriented medical practitioners perform such surgery taking away the essence and rationale, as well as the information about the inception of the tradition of the circumcision practice and give it what can be referred to as a somewhat false impression of just being interested or focusing on the removal of the foreskin of the male genital as the solution to HIV/AIDS and related diseases.

The present data further suggests that the current intervention of utilising some of the cultural traits is a way of winning the hearts and minds of the oppressed – in particular the black majority. The pioneers of the revival of this cultural rite seem to be either deliberately ignorant or turn a blind eye to the rationale that first led to such revival in

²⁷ Cattle herding.

countries such as the United States, which historically can be regarded as a Western world colony. In the US, this rite was revived and mostly performed by the previously disadvantaged populace while the generation of the beneficiaries of the spoils of colonisation remained less focused or encouraged to partake in such rituals. Also, the US revived this rite despite various medical studies that were conducted, revealing that there is no correlation between the removal of the foreskin and the automatic prevention of any future possible sexual infection. In Africa, the US conducted what other scientists saw as haphazard studies in three countries, basing all future action on findings from them to justify the use of circumcision under the tutelage of cultural revival; and all it seems to be highly influenced by the dollar bill.

Furthermore, data suggests that all communities are in favour of the spirit of cultural revival approach but they lack critical scrutiny of the viability and relevance of a particular traditional rite such as circumcision. This was revealed by declaring the revival of such a practice without considering the relevant infrastructure such as space-land availability, relevant practitioners and its purpose. In addition, data suggests that they tend to consider indigenous knowledge systems as something stagnant and limited when understanding signs and symbols, in relation to understanding the meanings of such rituals.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study thus, has helped to revisit the notion of revival of the culture. As the bearer of indigenous circumcision ritual which forms part of the cultural practice, it should be revived and practiced in the presence of its bearers. For instance, ancient Zulu nation methods of practicing the circumcision ritual, is presently conducted in hospital under the guidance of medical doctors and foreign donors instead of community elders.

The findings highlight experiences and perceptions of young people

in urban settings that have played a significant role in influencing their socialisation processes which have been transmitted by their families as well as the electronic media. This also highlights the ignorance and lack of access to the relevant cultural social set-up of most urbanised Zulu youth about the ritual practice that has forced them to opt for the hospital as an attempt to observe the practice and as a way of meeting challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS phenomena.

This intervention raises a lot of concerns, especially when the present indigenous practices are being labelled vulnerable to the spreading of HIV and related diseases, yet programmes are introduced to strengthen reasons for having the operation, but which promote Western methods. Based on these observations, it is evident that the current SA Government circumcision intervention is “foreign owned” and driven with little fronting of black people. This means this whole process contributes to the advancement of the US cultural programme using African culture which becomes something new altogether, as it does not revive the ancient African culture which operates under different social settings. This study helped in critically reviewing this intervention as well as assisting in outlining a clear understanding of the relevance of this rite, as what is being observed is that one can partake in or abandon it as it is a totally foreign concept dictated by a different culture. Be that the case, a brief exploration of the relevance of the ritual and confusion thereof has to be summed up here.

The modern hospital approach remained as the “only” option because indigenous men do not have an alternative due the current capitalism set-up that alienates people from their surroundings. For example, young men in the township tend to grow up without any exposure to family house chores such as *ukwelusa*, except their exposure to a pre-planned, selected and imposed terrain through electronic media such as television. In addition, this imposed knowledge is entrenched by radio messages that are seen to be presenting the truth, as it comes from a government-oriented institution without any thorough critical scrutiny.

Furthermore, this becomes more official through the involvement of traditional leadership of which most of the indigenes pay homage to. This has been exacerbated by the demands of capitalism to keep everyone busy working and to quarantine the youth in schools that render education that tends to keep them alienated from better understanding themselves and nature in general (*Gay, 2004*).

It also tended to oppose the significance of the endurance test, which was meant to gauge the manly prowess of the individual undergoing this ritual (*K'Aoko, 1986:16*). This type of practice tends to follow the same old pattern of subjugation or inferiorisation of the indigenous knowledge system to the Western-oriented education system. For example, respondents repeatedly said what is generally pronounced in various electronic propaganda machineries without them critically interrogating the true essence of what they are purporting to be fact. This then tends to ignore the fact that they are alienated from the true meanings of the ritual, as most of the literature highlights that this ritual was performed as a sign/symbol of commitment to the faith and nationhood, as well as the symbol of blood offering (*Doyle, 2005*).

The failure of a critical scrutiny in relation to the relevance of the circumcision rite in the current liberal capitalist socio conditions tends not to be limited when it comes to a meaningful contribution towards cultural revival or in curbing the scourge of HIV/AIDS. The present socio capitalist system does not share the same ideology of royal theocratic order which formed the basis of where the inception and guidance of the circumcision rite was performed. So, it can be argued that any revival in the current capitalist framework will not in any way be contributing towards the revival of African culture *per se*, but will rather be nothing more than a blood sacrifice by the subjects of the “former” colony of the Western world. This then becomes a blood sacrifice by the Western world as such revival declarations are commissioned and highly funded by them, and indigenous people are just complying with the directive from the colonisers as they do not own this process.

Thus, the reasoning behind it is that the indigenes will start developing a false sense of belonging or owning or a sense of feeling as part and parcel of the current socio-political system. It is generally held that people perform certain rituals in order to succeed in whatever they want to achieve irrespective of whether it has good or bad intentions, and the outcome after the performance of such rituals tends to determine whether the ritual was a success or not. The failure to assess the success or the failure of the ritual will result in the continuation of the spell (such domination by foreign nation through the imposition of their cultures and values) that led initially to perform such a ritual.

Perhaps, in trying to assess the impact of the circumcision practice, it would be wise to recap what has been practiced generally by other Nguni people in the southern region. Based on what has been observed, it has been ascertained that the Nguni people – such as the amaXhosa and abeSuthu people – have sustained the ritual practice, but regarding the sustenance and meeting the desired expectations of the ancient African community as is the norm of the practice, I will argue that the true aspirations of the indigenous populace in this era are not free from Western and related colonialist manacles. However, the current socio-political settings tend to confirm what has been highlighted by Mayekiso (1996) when he argues that those colonisers are doing everything possible to maintain the status quo. In addition, this is observable in our black African communities that continue to be landless and quarantined in the labour reserves such as homelands, townships, informal settlements, and remain forced to sell their labour power for their livelihoods.

Furthermore, the present traditional circumcision practices tend to promote the capitalist agenda, as they are held within a defined and oriented framework. For example, initiation schools are held on public holidays to enable young men to be ready to sell their labour after such holidays. In other words, if present initiation schools are the repository of the desired labour power for the highly exploitative and inhuman capitalist system, then that suggests that initiation schools

are no longer serving their initial purpose. This is also illustrated by the exorbitant price that is paid by the initiates when enrolling in initiation schools. In arguing further, initiation schools seem to be less interested in challenging the present imposed capitalist agenda, except to say that this cultural practice needs to be reconsidered. Therefore, this suggests that present cultural practitioners and scholars in this field tend to be limited in their critical scrutiny of the true intentions and inception of this rite of passage.

The high media coverage of terrible incidents that occur in traditional circumcision practices justifies the need to introduce Western hospital circumcision practices in urban areas. Again, urban communities together with their leadership also fall into the same trap of limited critical scrutiny of social developments. However, the urban based hospital intervention approach tends to be driven by investments of high sums of money and internal political agendas. Indigenous leadership in both urban and rural settings tends to be less interested in anything that is different from the present democratic settings. This scenario confirms what Manzo (1991) highlighted, that the colonisers ensured that the colonised populace were taught in the Western-oriented schooling system that made them aspire and to think like colonisers – in other words, they “cease” to be themselves in terms of understanding and knowing their environment.

Moreover, despite the fact that almost all societies, especially African communities, track the inception of circumcision from *The Book of Life* – the Bible – they tend to be very selective in what they will adhere to or practice, and ignore other related passages in this regard. For example, although there is clear consensus about the inception – the Bible remains a most welcome and relevant document that illustrates the inception – relevance in the passage of time and related rituals today suggest the “*circumcision of the heart principle*” Romans 2:28-29 and related rites. Perhaps, the present indigenous populace lacks the understanding of the ancient African parables in present times.

This failure contributes to the lack of true social transformation

of the community in line with time that is meant to redress past injustices. In addition, it results into what Welsing (1991) calls a circular thought approach when solving current challenges in all social spheres instead of advancing towards a linear approach of solving problems, changing step-by-step anything that wants to be altered to achieve a total problem solution. Furthermore, perhaps the new circumcision practice that is currently marketed through the media, as well as the recent launch of this rite in the institution of higher learning such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal in conjunction with a clinical medical approach, may be regarded as the arena where discussions to advance a better understanding and relevance of some of the indigenous rites like circumcision in view of the prolonged years of colonisation that totally disoriented African identity. In addition, this will enable the possibility of introducing ancient methods such as *ukusoma* that encourages a higher discipline for individuals and a relationship that guarantees a zero sum: sexual intercourse that results in no penetration and no pregnancy. This will also enable the need to reconsider the present “arm-guard” approach that is characterised by the usage of condoms that literally encourages individuals to partake in sexual intercourse that involves penetration. The above mentioned study revealed that this approach tends to inculcate a false perception that purports the idea that using condoms as the “arm-guard” guarantees against possible infection of sexually related diseases. However, its advocates tended to overlook the side effects that emanate from this approach, as it indirectly encourages the possibility of multi-sexual relationships; in other words, it inculcated the prostitution behaviour amongst the community and in particular the youth.

This then demands the need for a critical theory that poses great challenges to the leaders, scholars, as well as thinkers, especially from the previously colonised countries, in particular in the African continent, to start considering options that are meant for lasting solutions to contemporary challenges posed by colonisation.

Continuous failure to consider what has been suggested above as issues for consideration will result in what Alatas (1974) calls the “captive mind”, which largely refers to the theoretical and institutional dependence of traditional leadership, in particular scholars and African people in general to Western thought, leadership and the uncritical and imitative manner in which such knowledge is assimilated and disseminated.

Furthermore, Abdullah and Low (2005) noted that the intellectual imperialism has resulted in a lack of attention on issues that should be of critical concern in African communities. Therefore, this situation requires the intervention of all stakeholders to start addressing the true needs of African people – from dominant and marginalised cultures – and an implementation of a realistic, practicable strategy in dealing with possibilities of changing the current educational curriculum towards a proper development (*Oliver, 1988*). A scientific attempt for universal development that is geared towards solid foundations, cultural possessions, habits and beliefs, and not an imitation of the Western approach to development, will be tantamount to intellectual imperialism (*Hawi, 2005:6; Mthembu, 2010:95; Welsing, 1991*).

Based on this submission, South African society, and in particular black Africans in their endeavour to find their head, should at the same time attempt not to lose their feet, especially in the era where they are expected to redress past injustices. It is recommended that the following be seriously considered:

Traditional leadership needs to revisit their understanding of the rationale behind the inception of the circumcision ritual, before they determine its revival or continuance. Their failure to achieve a clear understanding in this regard will be nothing more than putting their subject through a ritual that does not serve the healing of their people from the sufferings and setbacks caused by colonialism. Instead it will be nothing less than the offerings of their continuance of their subjugation.

There is a need for the traditional leadership, the indigenous people

and general populace who have held on to the idea that “during” colonialism the indigenous culture was dormant, meaning it did not change according to time, to know that it is not true. That is why it is recommended that further studies be conducted that will shed more light on whether all cultural activities that are being revived are still relevant and their role in any way advancing a true African reality – a spirit of *Ubuntu*. In addition, this will help in shedding light on whether indigenous culture is about fulfilment of prophecy or is just a fulfilment of individual desires in line with the whole Bible or certain parts of it that favour a particular individuals interest.

Failure to this effect will ensure that the true intentions of the present circumcision practice remain hidden, as they will voluntarily offer their blood as the sacrifice for continuation of their suffering, and their true understanding of their participation indirectly contributes in fuelling colonialist oppressiveness. Besides that, the present revivalist intervention tended to nullify and ignore a decree of abandonment of the circumcision rite by King Shaka, the founder of the Zulu nation who replaced it with *ukuqhatha* rite. This suggests that they tend to shy away from the demands of practicing *ukuqhatha* which demands relevant infrastructure such as land or *veld* where free young men can effectively perform this ritual while herding their families’ livestock. In other words this ritual can be performed by a free society, which cannot be found within a democratic capitalist society that demands a high supply of labour which is exposed to exploitation in the workplace.

In addition, the present intervention tends to favour the clinic or hospital method as it supports the social settings that are geared for a large labour supply, and young men do not spend lots of time away from work when performing this rite as it takes only a few hours for the procedure and few days for healing. In this case young men will be ready to work at a cheap rate soon after. This also suggests that there is still demand for revisiting the issue of land access by the previously disadvantaged populace in the country in order to do away with slavery-

oriented social settings of worker-oriented tendencies in all social spheres including in policy development. There is also a need for a shift in thinking of all social structures to enable individuals to transcend the Greek-Christian-Judaism linked Protestant ethics that keep indigenous of Africa treated as appendages of foreign ideals, quarantined and exposed to an exploitative capitalist system and fatalistic infectious diseases. It is more significant than before, as most scholars as well as indigenous leaders tended to trace the origins of circumcision from the Bible where it is stated what should be done in later years, which remains a challenge to be discovered (Mthembu, 2006). My forthcoming book entitled *Male circumcision rites versus Zulu culture: a transcended Afrocentric analytical perspective* will attempt to critically scrutinise the youths’ insights in relation to the relevance of the continuance and sustenance of the circumcision rite and bring forth suggestions that can be considered in our present endeavours to advance the armour against dreadful communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and TB in this era.

There is a suggestion that the indigenous populace in general and present scholars in this field need to start considering practicing some form of transcending beyond the normal revered Western based knowledge system, as the majority of them tend to think and analyse with the auspiciousness of democratic settings. It is also highlighted that populace in general tend to cling to foreign ideals that shy away and promote the destruction of the relevance of theocratic principles within indigenous social settings. Therefore, the African saying that says: “*Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*”²⁸ becomes more apparent, especially to African and global communities, irrespective of whether you are practicing it or you are in the process of reviving such a cultural practice.

Perhaps for the Nguni people in South Africa lessons need to be learnt from other nations that have practiced this type of rite of passage

28 A Nguni proverb: The way is asked from those who walk a pass through it.

in different eras, as historians, scholars and Nguni accounts confirm a historical linkage between these distant nations. For example, when the African scholar Magema (1998) attempted to narrate the origins of the Zulu people, he stated that they come from eMbo that refers to ancient Kemit (Egypt). Sufficient evidence illustrates that circumcision was practiced in conjunction with other related forms of sacrifices and worshipping, like sun worshipping. Also, the Zulu nation at some point in history participated in the Kingdom of eLangeni using the snake charm for healing purposes. This form of healing is very popular in KwaZulu-Natal, and is used by a number of traditional healers such as Mr Khekhekhe Mthethwa (now deceased) from Eshowe area (*Mthembu, 2006; Andy, 2008*). Kemit artefacts show different statues and artistic paintings depicting women and men wearing symbols that resemble the snake, sun, and cow horns.

The most important fact remains that despite their utilisation of all these approaches, historical records reveal that Kemit tasted the highest heights of human civilisation. Despite such achievements in various social spheres such as pioneering work of medical priest-doctors, *Imhotep*,²⁹ it eventually crumbled down to a state of calamity that it is today.

Furthermore, this also raises a concern about the understanding of the rationale behind the ancestral worship that concerns the praising and worshipping of the Creator whom is known by many names based on location. For instance, though the people of KwaZulu-Natal believe in the name of *uNkulunkulu* and Jehovah, they seem to be limited when it comes to the understanding of these terms, in particular when comparing democratic versus theocratic values. The failure to consider this suggestion will be nothing more than just a failure and fear of the indigenous scholars to reveal true settings in line with the *Ubuntu* principle that emphasises truth and righteousness. In other words, the

²⁹ Father of medicine.

aspiration to reach a state of righteousness of African people and the human race in general, will remain the calling of those who want to transcend to a higher level linking with the Creator whom people know by His (God's) image – the ruler of the universe.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This submission attempted to go beyond the normal analysis of the present socio-political settings that continue to be dictated by Western democratic values that compromise the true basis of African knowledge systems. It attempted to revisit the definition of indigenous people as the means of trying to understand its underlying basis in relation to the practice of circumcision in the world as well as in Africa.

This writing also briefly looked at the rationale behind the inception of this ritual in the ancient world and its revival when it was almost abandoned in other parts of the world. Consequently, the revival of a culture that is currently being experienced in Africa was also revisited, especially when it comes to redressing past colonial injustices.

The historical narrative of the Zulu nation was revisited with a view to gaining a better understanding about the present cultural revival that use circumcision as a mechanism of curbing sexual diseases such as HIV/AIDS. It also looked at ancient methods that were used as the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, and compared them with present practices of clinical and traditional approaches.

This writing also critically looked at various urban youth experiences on the issue of circumcision, as well as related socialisation processes that are used to learn community rituals and their related environment. In addition, it also highlighted some of the suggestions that could be considered to redress past injustices and to regain their understanding of the rationale for abandonment or continuation thereof. All of this would be towards trying to avoid a situation whereby people participate in rituals

that further subject the former colonised to the same colonisation by offering their blood as the sacrifice to ensure the continued oppression.

Furthermore, this submission attempted to raise debates and a way of looking at the rituals such as circumcision in the present times in an attempt to reach out for a linear approach in addressing challenges faced by the indigenous of the world, including those based in Africa. In addition, it also helped to revive the need of Africans, and people in general, to do some introspection as to the relevance of rites that are performed, especially by previously disadvantaged communities. It also raises a need to revisit a parable that stated: “those who have eyes, let them see; those who have ears, let them hear,” because failure of considering what is said will result in taking one step forward and two steps backward.

This is why this approach cannot be acceptable to repeat the mistakes of the past especially in our times when South African society is endeavouring to redress colonial injustices. Thus, Emperor Haile Selassie I³⁰ of Africa and the universe once said: “Africa awaits its own creators.” The future is before us and poses great challenges to the young and old, irrespective of status, colour nor creed.

Finally, one belief in some quarters in Africa is that in the last days: “Princes and Princesses shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” So, it depends on each one of us to decide, whether to transcend the present, reach out, or remain stagnant and thus dead while alive, and end up partaking in pagan rites or rites that are neither understood nor fruitful. Indeed the future waits to witness a state of righteousness as the present human race attempts to shield itself from the scourge of sexual diseases such as HIV through the utilisation of traditional circumcision rites of which is viewed by some as the same old fallacy by neo colonialist agenda to perpetuate and

entrench the doctrine of democracy.

Circumcision in South Africa in modern times is a highly contentious and topical issue. Contemporary debates have revealed arguments that have bordered on jingoism and some support of the notion of political correctness and label such as the “culling of young men” of which tend to be unrealistic in redressing the impact of colonialism injustices. It is evident from all of this that something has gone wrong and this rite – this rite that is meant to be both once a revival of a noble cultural artefact and a preventative measure to the scourge of HIV/AIDS – has missed its true meaning along the way.

Some introspection, a revisit to aims and objectives of this exercise and a better intervention strategy needs to be undertaken for the country and its different cultural groups to be able to move forward as a nation to achieve a total emancipation and a self determination that all nations aspire to realise. For the Zulu nation, though no serious tragedies have been reported relating to the circumcision revival campaigns, there needs to be further scrutiny into the role of the procedure both as a preventative measure and a culturally correct practice. There needs to be a bridge between new and old, knowledge shared about where it all came from and what it means and symbolises, to where it takes any young, urban Zulu man who is a citizen of the global village.

This project only managed to bring out the dire need for information and laid bare room for further study and research in an area that speaks to the hearts of all parents in the country, Zulus as a nation, and citizens of the world. It became clear that ignorance is the worst sin that can lead to being abused, bullied and forced to perform procedures one has no inkling about at the expense of political correctness and loyalty to an ideal that is not one’s own.

³⁰ the father of Organisation of African Union (OAU) –now referred to as African Union (AU)

TABLE 2: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Nguni/Zulu term	English meaning
<i>Abakhwetha</i>	Initiates
<i>Ikrwala (s)</i> <i>Amakrwala (pl)</i>	Newly initiated man/men
<i>Ibutho (s)</i> <i>Amabutho (pl)</i>	Warrior(s)
<i>Iphempe (s)/Ekbankasini</i>	Lodge/The hut of isolation where circumcision takes place
<i>Inyanga</i>	Traditional healer
<i>Izichwe</i>	A healing poultice ground from a root known traditionally for its fast healing power
<i>Isichwe</i>	The herbs used for antiseptic purposes
<i>Imikhuba</i>	Customs
<i>Ubudoda</i>	Manhood
<i>Ukusoka</i>	Ceremony where the initiate is presented with “gifts”
<i>Ukwaluka</i>	Circumcision
<i>Umkhosi woselwa</i>	First-Fruits Ceremony
<i>Umbhanga</i>	For maidens
<i>Amadlozi</i>	Ancestors
<i>Ikbhankatha</i>	The principal of the circumcision school
<i>Ukublobonga</i>	Sexual intercourse practices such as the non-penetrative sex long practiced by tribes
<i>Abafana</i>	By Xhosa people referring to males who have undergone the same ritual processes

<i>Imfecane/Difaqane</i>	Refers to a civil war that was seen as destroying and crushing all other monarchies/To the Sotho speaking people it means “hammering” or “forced migration/removal”
<i>Ubuntu</i>	A citadel of truth and right principle
<i>Maat</i>	Ancient order of justice in all spheres of life – includes cosmic, political order, morality and good etiquette
<i>EMbo</i>	Refers to an ancient area that encompassed Sudan, Egypt, Somali and Djiboti, which was part of ancient Kush that today is referred to as Ethiopia
<i>Chiefs/Indunas</i>	The abdicated kings/princes during the King Shaka raid who were later selected to serve as overseers in the newly formed Zulu Kingdom. They later formed part of the aristocracy that enjoyed more power and privileges
<i>iSabuyazwi</i>	“The returner of sound” – refers to an echo, especially in the mountainous area/valley
<i>Amanzimtoti</i>	The sweet waters
<i>Intanjane</i>	Female circumcision that is routinely performed by women among girls
<i>Amadlozi</i>	Refers to those who have passed on and joined the spiritual world
<i>Sangoma</i>	Traditional healer
<i>Abaphansi</i>	People who have been buried
<i>Abangasekho</i>	Departed ones
<i>Abalele</i>	Just sleeping
<i>Ukuqhatha</i>	The cutting of a muscle frenulum beneath a man’s genital organ by utilising bull’s whisk string

<i>Umsasane</i>	A thorn used to make an opening for the bull's whisk string during the <i>ukuqhatha</i> rite
<i>Ukuklekla</i>	Ear piercing of young children
<i>Ukuphebla</i>	The process of removal of the strong blood that is known to be associated with bad behaviour of the young person
<i>Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu</i>	A person is human because of other people
<i>Umvelingangi</i>	It refers to a bigger, greater spiritual being that means the Creator God – although these terms are used interchangeably
<i>Nkulunkulu</i>	
<i>Amaqaba</i>	Unrepentant
<i>Amakholwa</i>	Repentant/born again
<i>Ibomvu</i>	Red ochre
<i>Swadi</i>	A herb that is used to stop bleeding

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Table 1: Prevalence of Male Circumcision by Country: Percentage of Men who are Circumcised, ranked highest to lowest

Table 2: Glossary of terms

